

Board of the Week 40

By Dick Chapman

Here's an interesting hand from a club matchpoint pairs game recently. Sitting West, you hold

♠4 ♥KQ1094 ♦KQ764325 ♣

South opens 1 spade. Your call?

Pass, double, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds, a Michaels cue bid of 2 spades to show the other major and an unspecified minor? All except double have some degree of merit.

Using a Michaels cue bid with more than five of the major will make it a bit difficult to get your shape across. However, to show five of the major and a longer minor, you might consider using the cue bid then bidding the minor. I'm not an expert so don't know whether this method would be suitable for a more extreme 5-7 shape, but 2 spades was indeed my call.

North bids 3 spades and it wasn't clear if this is "merely competing" or "invitational." Now your partner East bids 4 hearts. South 4 spades. Back to you.

I bid 5 hearts, North bids 5 spades, pass, pass. Ok, Bridge Expert, what do you do now? Pass, double, 6 hearts? Give it some thought.

I don't have a hand suitable for double. I might have zero tricks in my hand. So I passed. What did I overlook? There are two answers to that question.

First, partner made a completely unforced bid at the four level. Partner has to have some stuff. What stuff? Well, from my hand one can see that I need two aces out of the top three suits. The ace of clubs is worthless to me since they are certainly going to lead a spade. What is the second thing I missed?

Answer: I didn't take the field and form of scoring into account. This is club matchpoints. I should figure that a lot of pairs will buy the contract for 4 or 5 hearts, making, so setting 5 spades won't be much of a matchpoint score. +200 and -200 are probably going to be about the same score: terrible. -500 can't be much more terrible. So why not shoot the moon, 6 hearts? I didn't, but in the post-mortem I was kicking myself: partner had both red aces so 6 hearts makes without the slightest worry.

Over to you, East. Do everything you can to not remember the cards from above, but do take the auction into account. You hold

♠1096 ♥A8532 ♦A ♣9762

After 5 spades by North, should you bid 6 hearts? It doesn't look right, does it? Should you double? Hmm, a tougher call. Let's say no. That puts all the burden on West, right? ☺

East, you are now on defense and after the diamond king lead you see this (next column):

	♠Q832 ♥J7 ♦J108 ♣AQ84	
♠ ♥10 ♦K ♣		♠1096 ♥A8532 ♦A ♣9762
	♠ ♥6 ♦9 ♣	

You win the diamond in hand and lead the ace of hearts, which holds. Partner provides the 10 (udca). What is your play at trick 3? Do you trust your partner? Partner has 5 hearts so declarer is out. Partner doesn't know you have five, so the 10 has to be attitude, not suit preference. Partner is saying don't continue hearts! I got a heart continuation and we eventually scored a diamond for down 1 (+100) and a very poor score. The hand:

	♠Q832 ♥J7 ♦J108 ♣AQ84	
♠4 ♥KQ1094 ♦KQ76432 ♣		♠1096 ♥A8532 ♦A ♣9762
	♠AKJ75 ♥6 ♦95 ♣KJ1053	

If either defender had the courage to double, the hand can be down 2 for 500: diamond ace, heart ace, club ruff, and a diamond later or an immediate diamond ruff. But check the traveler:

Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
4*	♠	S	K ♥	4	790		11 0
4	♠	S	Q ♦	4	620		9.5 1.5
4	♠	S	K ♦	4	620		9.5 1.5
5	♠	S	K ♦	-1	100	8	3
5	♦	W	Q ♠	6	620	7	4
5	♥	W	2 ♠	6	680	3.5	7.5
5	♥	E	A ♠	6	680	3.5	7.5
5	♥	W	2 ♠	6	680	3.5	7.5
5	♥	E	A ♠	6	680	3.5	7.5
5	♥	W	Q ♠	6	680	3.5	7.5
5	♥	E	A ♠	6	680	3.5	7.5
5*	♥	E	A ♠	6	1050	0	11

It didn't matter whether we double, and it didn't matter whether we set it one or two. A plus 500 is the same

as a plus 100: 3 matchpoints on a top of 11. The only way to score here was to bid 6 hearts. So that puts all the burden exactly where I don't want it to be: on my back. For reasons given (setting spades won't beat the field) I should stick my neck out and bid 6 hearts. It either makes or it doesn't, but it's the money call in this hand. Being down 500 would have been 3 matchpoints, exactly as we achieved, and making 1430 would have been a cold top of 11. So we dropped 8 matchpoints on this board.

As long as we are hind-sighting, I will point out that we finished third in the EW field, four matchpoints behind first. Ugh, that makes it even worse. The opponents' push to 5 spades had put us in position to win, and I didn't capitalize. Double ugh.

Thanks to David Cockcroft for some ideas about this board. By the way, you don't see 18 point slams very often, do you?