

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH TANNAH HIRSCH & BOB JONES

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THE BEST LINE OF PLAY?

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH

♠ A 10 5 4 3 2
♥ A 9
♦ A K 8
♣ A 6

WEST

♠ 9 7
♥ Q 3
♦ Q J 10 7 3
♣ K J 3 2

EAST

♠ K 8 6
♥ 7 6 2
♦ 9 6 4 2
♣ 9 5 4

SOUTH

♠ Q J
♥ K J 10 8 5 4
♦ 5
♣ Q 10 8 7

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: Queen of ♦

South was stretching when he bid two hearts — many would have settled for one no trump. North had an awkward re-bid and chose to bid his three-card diamond fragment, which allowed South to show his sixth heart. North's battery of prime cards demanded bravery, and he leaped boldly to slam. Could South make it?

South won the opening diamond lead in dummy, cashed the ace of trumps and played a trump to his

jack. No luck. West won the trump queen and continued diamonds. Declarer ruffed this in hand, drew the remaining trump, and ran the queen of spades. No luck there either and the contract went down one.

Declarer was unlucky to have both major-suit finesses lose, but he did not take the best line of play. It may seem as though the given play, one out of two finesses, is 75 percent, but it is really much less. Two 4-1 breaks might well defeat the slam even if both missing honors are "onside." As long as the majors split 3-2, as here, the location of the missing honors is not relevant.

South should have cashed the king of diamonds at trick two, discarding a spade from his hand, and then played ace of spades and ruffed a spade. Now the king of hearts followed by a heart to the ace in order to ruff another spade. With the queen of hearts falling doubleton, this line yields all 13 tricks after South draws the last trump. Had the trump queen not fallen, declarer could concede a trick to it right now and later discard his club losers on dummy's good spades.

(Tannah Hirsch and Bob Jones welcome readers' responses sent in care of this newspaper or to Tribune Content Agency, LLC., 16650 Westgrove Dr., Suite 175, Addison, TX 75001. E-mail responses may be sent to tcaeditors@tribune.com.)

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FANTONI'S FINESSE

East-West vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH

♠ 9
♥ K 10 7 2
♦ 6 5 4
♣ 10 9 8 6 3

WEST

♠ 10 6 5 4 2
♥ J 6 4 3
♦ 9
♣ Q J 4

EAST

♠ K 8 7 3
♥ Void
♦ Q J 8 3 2
♣ K 7 5 2

SOUTH

♠ A Q J
♥ A Q 9 8 5
♦ A K 10 7
♣ A

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
Pass	1♥*	Pass	3♥**
Dbl	3♠	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♥
Pass	6♥	Pass	Pass

*forcing

**weak, 4+ trumps

Opening lead: Queen of ♣

Today's hand was played by Fulvio Fantoni of Italy. He and his partner, Claudio Nunes, play an unusual system, called Fantunes. It is a natural system, but many of the bids have different point ranges than the ones we use. One-level openings are natural, but forcing, and can be very strong.

Fantoni drove his terrific hand to slam, despite no cooperation from partner after showing four-card support. Declarer won the opening club lead and paused to consider the

curious double by East. East was vulnerable and a passed hand. What could he have to warrant entering the auction at a high level? The opening lead told Fantoni that East's high cards were limited to the black kings and the secondary diamond honors. Fantoni reasoned that East must also have a heart void or it would have been too dangerous to enter the auction.

At trick two, Fantoni led the five of trumps from hand and inserted dummy's seven when West played low! Next came the 10 of clubs, losing to West's jack as South discarded a diamond. West shifted to his singleton diamond, but Fantoni was in control. A trump to dummy's 10 was followed by the club nine. East rose with the king, South ruffed high, and drew the remaining trumps ending in dummy. A diamond and a spade went on dummy's established clubs, and a successful spade finesse provided the 12th trick. A beauty!

It would not have helped East to play low on the third club. South would discard another diamond, then take the spade finesse and ruff a spade. Had West any idea as to what was about to happen in the trump suit, he would have covered the five of hearts with the jack, killing the vital third entry to dummy.

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Thursday, February 13, 2014

GOREN BRIDGE

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LUCK OR SKILL?

Neither vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH

♠ K 7 4
♥ K 4 2
♦ 10 7 6 2
♣ A 10 2

WEST

♠ 8 3
♥ 10 6 5 3
♦ Q 9 4
♣ K Q J 9

EAST

♠ 9 5 2
♥ Q J 9 8
♦ K 8 3
♣ 7 6 4

SOUTH

♠ A Q J 10 6
♥ A 7
♦ A J 5
♣ 8 5 3

The bidding:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: King of ♣

North-South were playing a weak (13-15) no trump opening, which enabled them to find their spade fit easily — not such a good thing on this hand. North might well have bid three no trump at his last turn — nine tricks would have been so much easier — but South set off in search of 10 tricks in the given contract.

Declarer won the opening club lead and cashed the ace and queen of trumps. Next came the ace of hearts, a heart to dummy's king, and a heart ruff. South continued with a low club toward the 10. West could win and cash another club, but he then had a choice of presenting declarer with a ruff-sluff or breaking the diamond suit — either would allow South to bring home his contract.

This technique, known as a "partial elimination," usually requires some luck to be successful. South was lucky that West did not have the last trump or he could have played that card and scuttled the contract. The location of the club queen was known from the lead, but South was also lucky that East could not gain the lead with the club jack, or again, a trump play would defeat him.

Despite the luck factor required, South showed great imagination in giving himself this extra chance to make the contract!

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Friday, February 14, 2014

GOREN BRIDGE

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MADALA'S DEFENSIVE GEM

Neither vulnerable. East deals.

NORTH

♠ A K 10 5
♥ 10 9 4
♦ 10 8
♣ K 7 4 2

WEST

♠ Q J 9 8 7 3
♥ K Q 6
♦ A 9 7 6
♣ Void

EAST

♠ 6 2
♥ J 8
♦ Q J 4 2
♣ J 8 6 5 3

SOUTH

♠ 4
♥ A 7 5 3 2
♦ K 5 3
♣ A Q 10 9

The bidding:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
Pass	1♥	1♠	Dbl
Pass	2♣	2♦	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: Queen of ♠

West was Augustin Madala, a brilliant young player from Argentina, now living in Italy and playing on the top Italian team.

North's double is a bit curious, perhaps just showing values. He leaped to game at his second turn expecting his side club fit to be a bonus. Was it enough?

South won the opening spade lead in dummy and played a club to his ace. Madala realized that he would be endplayed if he ruffed this, so he discarded a spade. Had he ruffed, he

would have had to continue with the trump king. South's trump continuation would force Madala to play spades or diamonds giving away the contract in either case. Declarer now cashed the ace of trumps and Madala, fearing the same endplay, followed with the trump queen! Declarer played a low trump from hand and Madala ducked his king, continuing his same defense, which was basically praying for a miracle. When East was able to win this trick with the jack, Madala's prayers had been answered! East quickly shifted to the queen of diamonds and the contract was defeated with two diamond tricks and two trump tricks.

Madala's defense was brilliant, but could declarer have done better? South fell on his own sword when he played a club at trick two. Instead, he should have led the 10 of trumps from dummy, running it if East played low. Ace and another trump later would endplay Madala. Should East cover the 10 with the jack, declarer wins and continues trumps. There is nothing Madala can do to avoid the endplay short of giving away one of his trump tricks, and the contract would come home.

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Saturday, February 15, 2014

GOREN BRIDGE

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q 1 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ K 9 5 ♥ Q 2 ♦ A 10 9 7 3 2 ♣ A 6

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	

What call would you make?

Q 2 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ K J 7 ♥ 6 ♦ A 10 9 8 4 ♣ K 6 4 2

As dealer, what call would you make?

Q 3 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ 4 ♥ K 10 5 ♦ K Q J 6 4 2 ♣ 10 7 5

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♦*	Pass	2NT	3♣
?			

*weak

What call would you make?

Q 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ K 8 7 2 ♥ K 8 6 4 ♦ A 7 ♣ A 8 4

Right-hand opponent opens one heart. What call would you make?

Q 5 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A K 5 2 ♥ K Q 7 2 ♦ A K 4 ♣ 5 3

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥
?			

What call would you make?

Q 6 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ A Q 7 5 ♥ A Q 8 5 ♦ A K 10 9 ♣ 7

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	Pass	Pass	2♣
?			

What call would you make?

Look for answers on Monday.

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Sunday, February 16, 2014

GOREN BRIDGE

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DOUBLE GAME SWING?

Neither vulnerable. West deals.

NORTH

♠ Void
♥ 9 8 5 2
♦ K Q J 5
♣ A 10 8 7 4

WEST

♠ A K Q 7 3
♥ A J 7 6 4
♦ 6
♣ 6 2

EAST

♠ 9 6 5 2
♥ 3
♦ 10 9 8 7 4 2
♣ K 9

SOUTH

♠ J 10 8 4
♥ K Q 10
♦ A 3
♣ Q J 5 3

The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	Dbl	4♠	Dbl
Pass	4NT	Pass	5♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Opening lead: Ace of ♠

East's four-spade bid would be too bold for many, but it often pays to be aggressive with 6-4 distribution and a big fit. South can hardly be faulted for his penalty double, but the four-spade contract would have been unbeatable. Just as well, then, that North removed the double. Four no

trump was "pick-a-minor," and North-South arrived at a reasonable contract.

South ruffed the opening spade lead in dummy, crossed to his hand with the ace of diamonds, and ran the queen of trumps. East won the king, shifted to his singleton heart, and got a heart ruff in return. A diamond for West to ruff defeated the contract by two tricks.

This was not a bad result compared to four spades making for East-West, but should declarer have done better?

South's line of play would have been reasonable playing matchpoints, as an overtrick at that form of scoring can be worth its weight in gold. At rubber bridge or teams, South should just play ace and another trump. This assures the contract whenever trumps split 2-2 or East has a singleton king. Should West turn up with three trumps to the king, the contract still has chances.

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GOREN BRIDGE

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WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ ANSWERS

Q 1 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ **K 9 5** ♠ **Q 2** ♦ **A 10 9 7 3 2** ♣ **A 6**

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
2♣	Pass	?	?

What call would you make?

A - Three no trump seems the most likely contract, but the heart suit is a worry. Many would gamble it out, but a two-spade bid here would never be raised — partner has denied a four-card major with his re-bid. It will focus partner's attention on the need for a heart stopper. We like two spades.

Q 2 - East-West vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ **K J 7** ♠ **6** ♦ **A 10 9 8 4** ♣ **K 6 4 2**

As dealer, what call would you make?

A - Prime honors — aces and kings — are a bit under-valued by the 4-3-2-1 point count. Secondary honors — queens, jacks and 10s — are more valuable when working with higher honors. Those factors are in play with this hand, as well as the existence of an easy re-bid. Open one diamond.

Q 3 - North-South vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ **4** ♠ **K 10 5** ♦ **K Q J 6 4 2** ♣ **10 7 5**

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2♦*	Pass	2NT	3♣

*weak

What call would you make?

A - Without the overcall, we would have re-bid three hearts to show a maximum weak two-bid with a feature in hearts. Does the overcall change anything? Not really. Bid three hearts.

Q 4 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ **K 8 7 2** ♠ **K 8 6 4** ♦ **A 7** ♣ **A 8 4**

Right-hand opponent opens one heart. What call would you make?

A - You have the wrong shape for double, are not strong enough to bid one no trump, and you shouldn't overcall with a poor four-card suit. What's left? Pass.

Q 5 - Both vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ **A K 5 2** ♠ **K Q 7 2** ♦ **A K 4** ♣ **5 3**

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	Pass	Pass	1♥

What call would you make?

A - Partner has denied having as many as six points, so we would pass with a balanced 12-14. We would have opened one no trump with 15-17, so what would a one no trump bid mean now? A balanced 18-19! Bid one no trump.

Q 6 - Neither vulnerable, as South, you hold:

♠ **A Q 7 5** ♠ **A Q 8 5** ♦ **A K 10 9** ♣ **7**

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1♦	Pass	Pass	2♣

What call would you make?

A - Similar to question five, 12-14 point hands shouldn't bid again in this position. All bids show a good hand or extreme distribution. Double is for take-out, asking partner to pick the trump suit, knowing about the suit you chose to open with. Double.

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