



### Play for the drop?

Hand 19 of the Taieri B morning session produced these cards for East-West

♠	♠ A K J
♥ J 8 5 4 2	♥ A
♦ A 9 7 5 4 2	♦ Q J 8 6 3
♣ A Q	♣ K 7 6 3

South was the dealer and passed at all tables. Most Wests now bid 1♦. Assuming North passes, what is East's best action? In East's mind, surely, slam is certain but a direct Ace-ask is not the wisest choice since East cannot yet be sure whether to bid the grand. So, a temporising 2♣ is the best bid now. At this point, West must show discipline and make a simple 2♦ bid (2♥ would be a reverse showing greater values). Now East can take control, ask for aces, and bid 6♦.

Most declarers now received the K♥ lead. They saw that they could make all 13 tricks if they could catch the K♦. Should they play for the drop or finesse? When a diamond is played from dummy, South plays the T♦. Declarer should play the Ace (which, as the cards lie, did drop the K♦). The reason is that, at this point, there are 11 cards in South's hand that could be the K♦ but there are 12 cards in North's hand; so there is a marginally greater likelihood that North has the K♦.

that she was not being allowed to play in her magnificent 8 card suit. East's final double was made with some confidence. Here is how the play proceeded. West led their fourth smallest spade which Gordon ran around to his J♠. He then played the T♠, West covered with the K♠, and dummy's A♠ won the trick. Now Gordon played 8 rounds of clubs on one of which West made the slight error of discarding a spade. This was the position with 3 tricks to go:

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

On the Q♠ East discarded Q♦ and South 6♦. Gordon now played dummy's last spade. Poor East had lost track of the discards so didn't know which Ace to keep. They discarded the A♦ and West had to give the last trick to Gordon's K♦.

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Gordon's own finest hour had come about through Frieda's overoptimistic bidding so he was relieved when she herself recalled the hand. "You played that 6NT on hand 8 in the afternoon beautifully, Gordon", she said fondly (at least, Gordon interpreted her tone as a fond one and felt a frisson of excitement). This time, Gordon was South and the full hand was

♠ A Q 7 5	
♥	
♦ 8	
♣ A K J T 9 8 7 4	
♠ K 9 6 4 3	♠ 8 2
♥ T 9 3	♥ A Q 8 7 5 2
♦ J 9 7	♦ A Q T 5
♣ Q 2	♣ 6
♠ J T	
♥ K J 6 4	
♦ K 6 4 3 2	
♣ 5 3	

West had been dealer and the bidding had been

W	N	E	S
Pass	2♣	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
Pass	6NT	Double	All pass

Frieda would have been the first to concede that her 6NT was an overbid but she was disappointed

### Game swing

This was hand 3 in the afternoon of Taieri B. Dealer South.

♠ Q J 7 6 2	
♥ A K J T 8	
♦ J 4	
♣ 7	
♠ A 9	♠ T
♥ Q 9 2	♥ 7 5 3
♦ K T 8 7 3	♦ A Q 9 6 5
♣ A J 4	♣ K T 5 3
♠ K 8 5 4 3	
♥ 6 4	
♦ 2	
♣ Q 9 8 6 2	

At one table South opened 2♠ showing a weak two-suiter including spades. In due course, North-South bid to 4♠ against which there was no defence. At other tables West was allowed to open 1♦ and, when East bid an aggressive 3♦, rebid 3NT. You will see that West has 8 top tricks and can take a club finesse through South for the ninth. But a club finesse the other way would be fatal. At one table North led a top heart (wouldn't you?) and declarer artfully played the 9♥. That persuaded North she had struck gold and she led the other top heart setting up declarer's Q♥. A rare double game swing.

### The tournament post-mortem

Frieda Mayer and Gordon Rhode had done creditably in the B point tournament. They had scored below 50% but had had a few unlucky boards. For a first tournament outing it had gone quite well. Meeting for afternoon tea in Gordon's bachelor flat they were looking at Hand 6 of the morning session (where Frieda was East and Gordon was West).

	♠ J 8	
	♥ Q J T 5 3	
	♦ 6 5 2	
	♣ K T 5	
♠ A Q 6 2		♠ 9 5 3
♥ K		♥ A 8 6 2
♦ A Q 7		♦ K J 8 4
♣ J 8 7 6 4		♣ 9 2
	♠ K T 7 4	
	♥ 9 7 4	
	♦ T 9 3	
	♣ A Q 3	

They recalled the rather strange bidding:

E	S	W	N
P	P	1♣	P
1♦	1♠	2♦	All pass

Frieda knew that she had played the hand

spectacularly well and was eager to relive the triumph. "South led the 9♥ and, already I knew heaps about his hand" she said proudly. "What do you mean?" asked Gordon. "Well", she went on, "Surely that is a doubleton heart since with a singleton North would have had 7 hearts and would have bid. Also, South had overcalled so must have exactly 5 spades since with 6 he would have opened a weak two." Gordon certainly agreed with her reasoning so tactfully did not point out that South was a madman who had overcalled on a 4 card suit and made a rather non-standard lead.

Encouragingly, he said "And what happened then, Frieda?". Frieda remembered very clearly. "I won the heart in dummy, led a small club won by South who played a trump that I won in my own hand. Then I played my remaining club which was won by North. North played their singleton spade which I won with the Q♠ in dummy and I played a third round of clubs, ruffing it with both opponents following. Now I started to count. South began with 5 spades, two hearts, and (I now knew) exactly 3 clubs; so they must have had 3 diamonds to begin with. But that meant that trumps were dividing 3-3. So I could draw trumps, ending in dummy and cash my two established clubs and the Ace of spades. I made 10 tricks for a top board."

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