

Who dares, slams *by Derrick Browne*

Aim for small slam with about 33 total points, and grand slam with 37 or better. But sometimes, as we shall see, other considerations come into play.

On this deal from the 2009 Trumps Winter Teams congress, Janet and John Ham had a good pickup against Al Simpson and John Newman, whose team eventually won the event:

Dealer South, EW vul.

	NORTH		
	S 98764		
	H AQ92		
	D A9		
	C 92		
WEST		EAST	
S JT3		S Q	
H T8		H 6	
D KQJT62		D 8543	
C 53		C KQJT764	
	SOUTH		
	S AK52		
	H KJ7543		
	D 7		
	C A8		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	<i>John H</i>		<i>Janet</i>
			1H
Pass	3D*	Pass	4NT
Pass	5H	Pass	6H
All pass			

The vulnerability deterred East and West from bidding, despite each having a great quality suit. North's 3D bid was a Bergen raise, showing 4-card heart support and 10-12 points. If those points included a doubleton spade, four trumps to the ace, and the king of clubs, for example, then South can see that slam should make.

As you see, North's hand was quite different to that, but not unsuitable. In fact, if the enemy spades had been divided 2-2 (a 40% chance), there would have been 13 top tricks for North-South, with only 25 HCP. With two long running suits, and aces or voids in the other suits, slam is often made with less than normal strength.

On the actual 3-1 spade break (which happens about half the time), a club is the only lead to defeat the contract. In practice, West led the obvious diamond sequence. Janet won, drew trumps, then played spades. One trick was lost but there was then time to discard the club loser on the last spade.

Sometimes it is possible to count tricks for a slam. Here is one bid by Carin and John Blazey in a club duplicate:

WEST		EAST	
S AK5		S 42	
H K85		H AQJT3	
D AK		D 54	
C T9742		C AKQ3	
WEST	EAST		
<i>John</i>	<i>Karin</i>		
1NT	2D (transfer)		
2H	3C		
3H	4NT		
5H	5NT		
6S	7H		
All pass			

East's 2D bid was a transfer, promising five hearts and asking West to bid 2H. East now showed the second suit and West disclosed the heart fit. Simple Blackwood revealed that West had the missing aces and kings.

East can now see there is no spade or diamond loser, as West is marked with the A-K in both suits. East is missing the HK, but partner is known to have that too. That leaves East's C3 as the only possible loser. With West having long clubs, it turns out that 7NT makes. However, if West had only two or even three clubs, it might be necessary to ruff the fourth round of clubs, which is why 7H is the safest option for East.