

Power of shape by *Derrick Browne*

Today's deals come from a Grand National Teams qualifying event. On the first, Marilyn Vaughan and Bev Wark won a game battle:

Dealer East, NS vul.

NORTH
S AKT9542
H —
D A
C Q9752

WEST
S QJ
H K9765
D 9642
C K6

EAST
S —
H AQJT43
D QJ7
C AJ84

SOUTH
S 8763
H 82
D KT853
C T3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>Vaughan</i>		<i>Wark</i>	
		1H	Pass
4H	4S	5H	All pass

After West's weak game raise to 4H, at least one North at another table passed "because we were vulnerable". With seven good spades and a 7-5 shape, North has the sort of freak shape where both sides make game, so at a very minimum should push the opponents to the 5-level.

Wark – with six good hearts and a void in North's spades – rightly had no hesitation in accepting the push, and made 5H, losing just two diamond tricks.

At some tables, North-South bid on to 5S and made it, doubled. Looking at all four hands, 5S can be defeated: East leads a low club (in theory an abysmal lead) to West's king, then wins the club return, and leads a third club for West to ruff.

From the same event, here is a different question about shape: how should a 6-5 be shown? Patsy McCartney and Jan Bates had no trouble in bidding their hands and reaching the top spot:

WEST	EAST
S AT743	S 5
H A7	H KQJ85
D —	D AJ86
C KJT865	C Q42

WEST	EAST
<i>McCartney</i>	<i>Bates</i>
1C	1H
1S	2D*
2S	3C
6C	Pass

Sometimes with a minimum hand it is necessary to open a 5-card major rather than a 6-card suit, to keep it lower later on. However, with six clubs and five spades, always open the clubs because you can comfortably bid the spades without it being a "reverse" bid, i.e. without pushing the auction too high.

The 2D bid from Bates was "fourth suit", an artificial bid forcing to game (it did not promise diamonds). West's 2S rebid not only showed five spades, it also suggested at least six clubs – else why would she have opened clubs? Bates then revealed the club fit and McCartney, figured slam was likely and it would be too hard to investigate grand slam, so she made the practical bid of 6C, which made easily.