

89. Human sacrifice

By Ron Klinger

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	6♥	?

(1) Michaels, 5+ spades, 5+ minor

What would you do now as South with:

♠ 1086542
♥ A8
♦ J54
♣ Q7

There is a natural tendency to trust the opponents when they bid a game or a slam when they are vulnerable versus not vulnerable. If East-West can make 6♥, the sacrifice in 6♠ doubled will be relatively cheap, but that 'If' is a big 'If'. The ♥A is a sure trick. Partner might have a trick, perhaps two. Then again, maybe partner has no defensive tricks and it sounds as though East is void in spades (no 4NT bid). OK, over to you. Your choice?

The deal arose during a teams' match on BBO.

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQJ97	
	♥ 64	
	♦ 8	
	♣ A10432	
West		East
♠ K3		♠ --
♥ KJ932		♥ Q1075
♦ Q63		♦ AK10972
♣ KJ5		♣ 986
	South	
	♠ 1086542	
	♥ A8	
	♦ J54	
	♣ Q7	

At the table, South bid 6♠, West doubled, all pass. One should not be too hard on South. It was only human to be taken in by East's bold 6♥ (other adjectives could apply). West led ♥3. Declarer took ♥A, finessed ♠Q and cashed ♠A. South lost a heart, a diamond and a club, two light, East-West +300. That would be a good sacrifice against 4♥ by East-West, but not against 5♥ (which can be beaten if North leads the ♦8 or the ♣A and switches to the ♦8 and receives a diamond ruff later) and definitely not against 6♥. Could North-South have avoided the phantom save (a sacrifice bid where your sacrifice contract fails and their contract would also have failed)?

At the other table:

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	3♠	4♠
Pass	Pass	5♥	All Pass

(1) 5+ spades, 5+ minor
(2) Splinter: Heart support, 0-1 spade

Assuming declarer takes the spade finesse, 4♠ will make. Against 5♥, North led ♦8, ace. On the ♥5, South rose with the ♥A and gave North a diamond ruff. North cashed the ♣A and that was one down, North-South +100. Suppose the bidding (not on the deal above) has started this way?

West	North	East	South
2♠	3♥	4♠	6♥.....

How can East-West tell whether they should be sacrificing in 6♠ and when they should be defending in 6♥? It is good to have some methods, even if they do not guarantee you will be right every time.

If it is clear that you are the sacrificing side and the opposition are bidding their slam to make, then:

- (a) In the direct seat (West above): Double with two defensive tricks, Pass with one trick or no tricks. If West doubles, East passes.
- (b) If West passes, East passes with two defensive tricks, Doubles with one defensive trick and sacrifices with no defensive trick.
- (c) If West passes (0 or 1 trick) and East doubles (1 trick), West passes with 1 trick and sacrifices with no tricks.

What is hard, of course, is to judge accurately what counts as a trick. Aces are likely tricks, kings are potential tricks and lower honours possible but not so likely tricks.

If the bidding has reached seven and the question is whether to save against the grand slam, then direct seat doubles with one trick, passes with none. After a pass in the direct seat, fourth seat passes or doubles with one trick, sacrifices with none.

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQJ97	
	♥ 64	
	♦ 8	
	♣ A10432	
West		East
♠ K3		♠ --
♥ KJ932		♥ Q1075
♦ Q63		♦ AK10972
♣ KJ5		♣ 986
	South	
	♠ 1086542	
	♥ A8	
	♦ J54	
	♣ Q7	

West	North	East	South
1♥	2♥ ⁽¹⁾	6♥	?

(1) 5+ spades, 5+ minor

Of course, this does not apply (yet) in the auction above on today's first deal, since North-South have not agreed on a trump suit, but perhaps the sacrifice approach at the 6-level can be adapted for such auctions. After (1♥) : 2♥ : (6♥), South would double with two tricks. With the actual hand, South has one trick and passes. When it comes to North, North might pass if judging that the ♠A + ♣A = two tricks. On the other hand, East's jump to 6♥ is surely based on a void and that figures to be in one of the black suits, probably spades (the suit North is known to have). If North judges the hand is worth only one trick, North doubles. South also has one trick and passes. Now West will be two down (diamond lead or ♣A and ♦8 switch) or one down (otherwise) for +500 (+9 Imps) or +200 (+3 Imps) to North-South instead of 9 Imps out.

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQJ97	
	♥ 64	
	♦ 8	
	♣ A10432	
West		East
♠ K3		♠ --
♥ KJ932		♥ Q1075
♦ Q63		♦ AK10972
♣ KJ5		♣ 986
	South	
	♠ 1086542	
	♥ A8	
	♦ J54	
	♣ Q7	

Suppose in the deal above, you interchange the ♥A and the ♥2 so that it looks like this.

West dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ AQJ97	
	♥ 64	
	♦ 8	
	♣ A10432	
West		East
♠ K3		♠ --
♥ AKJ93		♥ Q1075
♦ Q63		♦ AK10972
♣ KJ5		♣ 986
	South	
	♠ 1086542	
	♥ 82	
	♦ J54	
	♣ Q7	

Now 6♥ is unbeatable and 6♠ doubled is a bargain at -500. If you adopt the methods above, it would go (1♥) : 2♥ : (6♥) : Pass (0 or 1 defensive trick), (Pass) : Double (1 defensive trick) : (Pass) : 6♠ (no defensive trick), (Double), all pass. Of course, things might be trickier in this auction since North-South might not always have a huge trump fit and the sacrifice could be costly.

With only East-West vulnerable, East passes. What would you do as South with

♠ 7
♥ 5
♦ KQ432
♣ KQ10832

This deal arose in the same BBO match:

East dealer : East-West vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 1094	
	♥ A10962	
	♦ J1095	
	♣ 5	
West		East
♠ AK8632		♠ QJ5
♥ KJ		♥ Q8743
♦ 87		♦ A6
♣ AJ7		♣ 964
	South	
	♠ 7	
	♥ 5	
	♦ KQ432	
	♣ KQ10832	

At one table, East passed and South opened 4NT, freak hand with both minors. That is a very sensible choice. There is a good chance partner will be able to support one minor or the other. If North had support for one of the minors and three aces, there is a good case for North jumping to slam in that minor. It actually went:

West	North	East	South
			4NT
Dble	5♦	Dble	All Pass

Declarer lost a spade, a diamond and a club, one off, East-West +100.

This was the second of yesterday's problems:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♦
1♠	Dble ⁽¹⁾	2♦ ⁽²⁾	3♣
4♠	?		

- (1) 6+ points, 4+ hearts
- (2) 10+ points, 3+ spades

What would you do as North with:

♠ 1094
♥ A10962
♦ J1095
♣ 5

Partner is at least 5-4 in the minors possibly 5-5. You have one defensive trick. If partner has the ♣A, you can probably score a club ruff. Of course, partner might not have the ♣A and then you need partner to provide three winners to defeat 4♠. That is possible but unlikely.

In the auction above, North bid 5♦ : Pass : Pass : Double, all pass. Declarer lost to the three missing aces, one down, -100, no swing.

	North	
	♠ 1094	
	♥ A10962	
	♦ J1095	
	♣ 5	
West		East
♠ AK8632		♠ QJ5
♥ KJ		♥ Q8743
♦ 87		♦ A6
♣ AJ7		♣ 964
	South	
	♠ 7	
	♥ 5	
	♦ KQ432	
	♣ KQ10832	

As the cards lie, West can always make 4♠ with perfect play. If North leads the ♦J, take the ♦A, play ♠A and then ♥K. North can win and cash a diamond, but West can win the club shift, cash ♠K, ♥J, cross to ♠Q and pitch a club on the ♥Q. West loses a heart, a diamond and a club.

If North leads ♥A, gives South a heart ruff and South switches to the ♦K, you take the ♦A, play ♠Q, ♥Q, discarding your diamond loser and play a club. If South ducks, the ♣J wins. More likely, South will play the ♣K or ♣Q, you win, play ♠A, low spade to the ♠J and another club. Your ♣J will score a trick and you lose only the ♥A, a heart ruff and a club.

Finally, if North leads the ♣5, you capture South's ♣Q, draw trumps and play a heart. When in dummy next, play a club towards your ♣J. You lose a heart, a diamond and a club.

Problems for Tomorrow:

1. East dealer : Nil vulnerable

West	North	East	South
		Pass	?

What is your opening bid and what is your plan of bidding as South with:

♠ K5
 ♥ --
 ♦ AKQJ107
 ♣ KQ1087

2. North dealer : East-West vulnerable

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♦	1♠
3♦	3♠	Pass	?

What would you do as South with:

♠ AQJ108
 ♥ KJ972
 ♦ --
 ♣ 1095

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

Isolation activities: I have put liquor bottles in every room. Tonight, I'm getting all dressed up and going barhopping.