



THE DECLARER



June 2025

Volume 68 Issue 1

Ken Trock, Editor

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The Declarer

NJBL web site:	www.njbl.net
Editor	Ken Trock
	kentrock1@gmail.com
Contributors	Jay Korobow Brett Kunin Ken Trock
Reporting / Proofing	Brett Kunin Susan Slusky Arnold Kohn
Technical Advisor	Jay Korobow
Web Master	Susan Slusky
	segslusky@aol.com

The Declarer is published online four times per year by the New Jersey Bridge League (Unit 140, District 3 of the ACBL).

President's Message

by Brett Kunin



Despite attendance at Regionals and Sectionals continuing to be only 60% of pre-pandemic levels, and with the reduction of our Unit membership by 20% since 2020 (which reduced our income from the ACBL by \$2500 annually), the Unit remains in excellent financial condition. This has been accomplished not only with significant “belt tightening”, but with the hard work of all the members of the NJ Bridge League Board. This year, we were able to reintroduce the annual Charity Swiss, last held in 2019, which drew 19 teams.

The NJBL Board consists of 21 members, and all Board meetings are held online via Zoom. Due to our Bylaws limiting all members to 2 consecutive 3 year terms (at which point, those members must leave the Board for a year prior to again serving), there will be openings for at least 7 new members, and several critical positions must be replaced. A Nominating committee (consisting of both Board members and non-Board members) will be appointed in the Fall to fill these posts. I hope some of you will consider serving on the Board, and you would have the entire Summer to consider whether you can give back to the game of bridge by serving on the Board. If interested, and/or you have questions about serving, please contact me (brett54321@comcast.net) or the acting Membership Chair, Joe Wright (jwright44@verizon.net).

Our next Sectional will be July 18-20, and I hope you can attend.



Congratulations to Jiang Gu and Alex Perlin for winning the Jacoby Open Swiss Teams back at the Spring NABCs in Memphis, TN. They teamed up with David Yang of Illinois and Leo Lasota of Hawaii.

The Best and 10-derest Parts

by Jay Korobow



West Deals

None Vul

	♠ —		
	♥ K 10 8 4 3 2		
	♦ K Q 9		
	♣ 10 4 3 2		
♠ 3 2		♠ A Q J 9 8 7 6 5	
♥ J 9 7 6		♥ 5	
♦ 10 7 6 4 3		♦ 8	
♣ K 8		♣ A Q 5	
	♠ K 10 4		
	♥ A Q		
	♦ A J 5 2		
	♣ J 9 7 6		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 ♥	4 ♠	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass	

10s take center stage in this deal from a BBO team match. Both tables reached 4♠ by East, and only one South decided to double that contract after the auction shown. The ♥A was the opening lead, and in both cases North played the ♥10, which is an advanced signal showing something other than count or attitude in this instance. With the best agreement for trick 1 being to give information that partner needs to know most, here it was realized that count (usually a 6 card suit for a weak 2 opening) and attitude (it's likely that North has the ♥K) were of far less value than what other strengths North might possess to assist in a successful defense.

Being on the same page as partner, South knew that the Heart played by partner at trick 1 would convey significant meaning accordingly. South could certainly have led the singleton ♥A for example and would need to know what suit to play next, perhaps to even get their partner immediately on lead to get a Heart ruff before trumps were drawn. East holding ♥Kx (such that the ♥A that was led was a singleton) was eminently possible from North's view, so they dutifully played the ♥10 to show a high side suit, that is, interest in Diamonds. A low Heart would have shown a low side suit, or Club interest. Most readers know this is because Diamonds are higher than Clubs in both the bidding, and in alphabetical order.

Because of the weak 2, North was known to have many choices of spot cards in Hearts, so a middle card other than the higher ♥10 or lower ♥2 could be played to show no special interest, or a mild one at best (the 4 might mean their Clubs are slightly better than their Diamonds, although nothing great in either side suit). So, the high ♥10 told South their partner had a helpful Diamond (an Ace or King) or maybe on some rare days their interest could be because of a singleton or void, suggesting they would like Diamonds played next.

At the undoubled table, South thereby immediately switched to Diamonds, but Declarer ruffed the second round and was in full control. They lost one Spade trick in due course, but there was no way for the defense to take more than 3 tricks, hence: +420 for East/West.

This South, who was seemingly astute enough to double, also keenly saw a way to take 4 tricks by doing something to enhance the power of the ♠10 in their hand. They continued Hearts, knowing Declarer would ruff, but also knowing they had a likely entry to North's hand in the promised Diamond strength, when and if needed. And indeed, it was needed when they later gained the lead with the ♠K after Declarer played ♠A then ♠Q. Only now, when out of Hearts, could they play a Diamond, *underleading* their ♦A to partner's ♦K, for maximum reward. With North then on lead, a third round of Hearts in the position below is an "uppercut" that secures the setting trick for the ♠10, and a score of plus 100 for North/South!

♠ — ♥ K 8 4 3 ♦ Q 9 ♣ 10 4			
♠ — ♥ J 9 ♦ 10 7 6 4 ♣ K 8	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> N W S E S </div>	♠ J 9 8 7 6 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ A Q 5	
♠ 10 ♥ — ♦ A J 5 ♣ J 9 7 6			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	2 ♥	4 ♠	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Well Done! But if you like your bridge steaks Very Well Done, South's doubling goose would have been cooked had Declarer sensed the fate ahead: Instead of ruffing the second round of Hearts, East can let South's ♥Q hold the trick, and pitch their singleton Diamond. This avoidance play (effectively removing North's entry) guarantees 10 tricks and +590, as there is no way that North/South can effectively manage the defensive plays needed to set this due to the lack of communication between hands.

Sometimes these hands have hidden delights, and this one is actually a gourmet edition of what-ifs. What if North had overtaken South's ♥Q at trick 2 with their ♥K? Then it won't help East to pitch that singleton Diamond, because North is now on lead and playing a third Heart ensures the ♠K10x holding of scoring 2 tricks (you can try it, if East ruffs with the ♠J or ♠Q, South just pitches, retaining ♠KTx and scoring 2 trump tricks). And again, the result will be a set.

So, in that overtaking scenario, Declarer must ruff the ♥K to prevent this and keeps their losing Diamond for the moment. But alas, West has the now high ♥J! East ruffs trick 2 (and plays the ♠A if they want but not really needed yet) and then plays a Club to Dummy's ♣K. South will of course ruff with a small trump when Declarer next plays the ♥J to pitch that singleton Diamond. But the defense will collect 1 Heart and 2 Spades in total and nothing else, for -590.

There are several other variations for this hand that are a bit too complex for most, but the best part of the last overtaking scenario may be that instead of West saying "nice bid pard, but I did have one big card for you", they can instead say "TWO big cards!".

A Funny Hand

by Ken Trock

I was playing a speedball IMP game recently with Paul Fried on BBO. I was declaring 3NT on the lead of a Spade.

Contract: 3NT Ken
Lead: Low Spade

Paul
 ♠ KQ43
 ♥ KQ74
 ♦ K102
 ♣ 93

Ken
 ♠ AJ72
 ♥ A62
 ♦ A64
 ♣ QJ5

Since it was IMPs I quickly wrapped up 9 tricks when Hearts didn't split (4 Spades, 3 Hearts, 2 Diamonds). The defense took the last 4 tricks.

Paul commented that the contract should be made. I said I did make it. I looked at the scoreboard and sure enough I was in 4 Spades -1.

These speedball games move fast, 14 minutes for 3 boards, 4 ½ minutes per hand. I suppose I lost a little concentration. I'd estimate we gain a minute per board online from not having to sort and put away cards and keep score. I believe we get around 7 minutes per board at local clubs.

Unit 140 Top Masterpoint Earners Combined for April Charity Weekend and May Sectional

Player	Masterpoint Range		
	0 – 1500 MPs	1500 – 5000 MPs	5000 + MPs
Zhu Liu	9.98*		
Bo Gao	9.98*		
Jin-Ming Liao	9.98*		
Ke Zhao		17.92*	
Robert Brolin		17.92*	
Komal Kamat		14.40	
Jiang Gu			21.33
Arnold Kohn			16.21
Dennis Thompson			9.40

Effective Slam Bidding (Part 3)

by Brett Kunin

This is the 3rd installment of 3 on this topic. These hands are from a not too recent live Common Game. On board 4, with both sides vulnerable, partner opened 2♥ in 1st chair, my RHO passed, and I held a hand that was always bidding at least 4♥, to wit: ♠ AQ3 ♥ A8 ♦ AJ10984 ♣ AQ. Although our preempt style is extremely disciplined in 2nd chair, our requirements are not so rigid in 1st (although this partner, Dennis Thompson, would be significantly better vulnerable). We play Feature responses to a 2NT asking bid, showing an outside Ace or King if partner has a good quality preempt*. Therefore, although unlikely, I would like to be in slam if partner likes his hand and holds the ♦ K.

* **Editor's Note:** I have seen this treatment/convention called Optimized Feature

The remainder of the auction was uncontested. I bid 2NT, and to my surprise, partner responded 3♦, and without further ado, I bid 6♥ (looking at the trump Ace, and to like his hand, partner would not hold less than ♥ KQxxx). The full deal was:

Dealer: West		<u>East (Brett)</u>	
Vul: Both		♠ AQ3	
		♥ A8	
		♦ AJ10984	
		♣ AQ	
		<u>North</u>	<u>South</u>
		♠ K106	♠ 8754
		♥ 954	♥ 106
		♦ K63	♦ 2
		♣ 10874	♣ KJ9652
		<u>West (Dennis)</u>	
		♠ J92	
		♥ KQJ732	
		♦ Q75	
		♣ 3	

Dennis' hand was so good that he upgraded the ♦ Q, showing it as a feature. The slam was bid 3 times of 12, but no other pair made such a scientific inquiry.

There was little to the play. Dennis received the ♣ 4 lead, rising with the ♣ A, drew trump in 3 rounds, and played a small Diamond to the ♦ 8, came back to his hand with a Club ruff, finessed in Diamonds again, and claimed (as the Spade finesse was unnecessary). Many pairs made 7♥, including the other two pairs who bid the slam.

The lessons here are: 1. If your style is to play disciplined preempts, I strongly recommend that you use 2NT as a feature ask; and 2. If you are always going to bid a game, even if slam is unlikely, it does not hurt to use the methods in your toolbox to ask.

Our last hand of the day was board 8, both non-vulnerable. Dennis was the dealer and opened 1♣ in first chair (with the remainder of the auction uncontested). I bid 1♠ holding ♠ 10632 ♥ AK ♦ AKQ9 ♣ K42. Much to my surprise, Dennis raised to 2♠. Because we will raise with 3 card support with side suit shortness, it was not guaranteed that partner had 4 card Spade support. I bid 3♦, and Dennis bid 3♠, showing a minimum hand, likely with 4 Spades. After a Blackwood inquiry, partner showed 3 key cards (we play 1430 responses) with a 5♦ response, I bid 5♥, asking about the ♠ Q. Partner denied it by bidding 5♠. Since I felt that going into the last round, we might need one more good result to win the event, I bid the slam, off the trump Queen. Dennis had a bare minimum 8 loser hand: ♠ AK97 ♥ T962 ♦ 64 ♣ A96. Although I generally will not open an 8 loser hand with AK and A being all the HCP, I confess that with both majors, I also would have opened Dennis' hand. The hand was not difficult to play. I was going down anytime that trump broke 4-1, and the hand would have been more problematic if Dennis held 3 Diamonds rather than 2.

<u>Dennis</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>Brett</u>	<u>LHO</u>
1♣	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦ ¹	Pass	5♥ ²	Pass
5♠ ³	Pass	6♠!	All Pass

¹ – 0 or 3 controls

² – Asking about ♠Q

³ – Denies ♠Q

Dummy

♠ AK97
♥ 10962
♦ 64
♣ A96

Contract: 6♠

Opening lead: 5♣

Declarer

♠ 10632
♥ AK
♦ AKQ9
♣ K42

In any event, you need to make the hand, so plan your line of play after the good lead of the 5♣ (presumably 4th best). You draw 2 rounds of trump, noting the fall of the ♠J on the second round by your RHO. You may be able to pitch a Club from the board on the 3rd high Diamond; or if Diamonds split 5-2 and the hand with long Diamonds also holds the ♠Q, you may survive.

You have no other alternative, as if you draw the remaining trump, you only come to 11 tricks. Therefore, you cash 3 high Diamonds, and when the suit breaks 4-3, you pitch the Club loser from the board. You now play a Club to the Ace on the board, come back to hand with a Heart, ruff a Club on the board, come back to hand with a second Heart, then ruff a Diamond with the dummy's last trump. Having stripped the hands, you can now exit a trump and claim.

It's not a great slam, but playing for the only distribution that permits it to make, you survive. One other pair bid the slam (unfortunately, the pair we needed to catch), but the effort secured our position as 2nd overall.

The full deal:

Dennis

♠ AK97
♥ 10962
♦ 64
♣ A96

LHO

♠ Q85
♥ 843
♦ 1072
♣ 10875

RHO

♠ J4
♥ QJ75
♦ J853
♣ QJ3

Brett (Declarer)

♠ 10632
♥ AK
♦ AKQ9
♣ K42

Note that whether you should bid the slam in a team game depends on how likely the opponents' pair in your chair are to bid it, and the state of the match. Of course, if you knew that partner was AK and A and out, you would never have attempted it (if partner had either the ♥Q or ♣Q, slam is a good bet, barring a 4-1 trump split). Also, with neither the trump Queen nor Jack in an 8 card fit and only 30 HCP, slam is NOT a good proposition.

The lesson here: when you're in an inferior contract, if there is only one line of play that will work, and if the field is unlikely to be in the slam, you must play for that line.

Big Games

(Must be face-to-face to qualify)

March 2025 – May 2025

OPEN		
77.41%	Andrew Barlow - Leigh Walker	Shadowfax
76.33%	Andrew Barlow - Ashok Agarwala	Shadowfax
76.18%	Jiang Gu - Glenn Robbins	NJBL Spring Sectional
75.52%	Robert Derosa - Hans Neuteboom	Toms River BC
75.42%	Anthony Palumbo - Hans Neuteboom	Stafford BC
74.14%	Jim McCarroll - Arnold Kohn	Bill's Bridge
73.49%	Bonnie Britton - Sam Borenstein	Summit Area Bridge
73.30%	Dennis Thompson - Sam Borenstein	Summit Area Bridge
72.32%	Donna Dulet - Stephen Arshan	Spring Lake BC
72.22%	Judy Buell - David Harris	Shadowfax
72.11%	Andrew Barlow - Leigh Walker	Shadowfax
71.88%	Rochelle Djmal - Sonia Bibi	Jersey Bridge Club
71.88%	Harris Bobroff - Wieslaw Ostrowski	Stafford BC
71.39%	Herbert Shulman - Anthony Palumbo	Jersey Bridge Club
71.13%	Dennis Thompson - Steve Albin	Bill's Bridge
70.92%	Jiang Gu - Glenn Robbins	NJBL Spring Sectional
70.83%	Jim Buell - Andrew Barlow	Shadowfax
70.62%	Richard Ross - Alexander Allen	Jersey Bridge Club
70.37%	Andrew Barlow - Leigh Walker	Shadowfax
70.25%	George Kalb - Simon Thomson	Summit Area Bridge
70.05%	Lawrence Gordon - Andrew Barlow	Summit Area Bridge
70.00%	Stephanie Miller - Bill Miller	Bill's Bridge
70.00%	Jim McCarroll - Barbara Codispoti	Shadowfax
70.00%	Robert Martin - Tim Mahoney	Spring Lake BC

LIMITED/INVITATIONAL		
75.53%	Norm Kersh - Gail Kornfeld	Westlake BC
74.76%	Bharat Shah - Marek Glowacki	Regency at Monroe
74.00%	Terrence Havican - Sheila Holderness	Montclair Golf Club
73.75%	Joan Gotti - Karen Friedman	Queens of Hearts BC
73.18%	Betty Feifer - Alan Wurman	Regency at Monroe
73.13%	Gordon Cable - Richard Gurak	Stonebridge BC
71.67%	Bobbie Cohen - Harvey Keller	Westlake BC
71.67%	Ann Hawley - Michael Jeary	Rumson Friday
71.25%	Bob Welgos - Ginnie Thomas	Shadowfax
71.25%	Chris Skibell - Patrick Horan	Bill's Bridge
71.11%	Jim Rothschild Jr - Eric Greenebaum	Interclub Bridge NJ
70.63%	Herb Allen - Stan Dubroff	Westlake BC
70.56%	Peter Maulbeck - Ellen Ostrovsky	Summit Area Bridge
70.44%	Ken Smith - Gudmundur Vigfusson	Montclair Golf Club
70.24%	Bob Welgos - Ginnie Thomas	Shadowfax

**SILVER POINTS**

New Jersey Bridge League Summer Sectional July 18-20, 2025

**SILVER POINTS**

Edison Elks Lodge
375 Old Post Road, Edison, NJ 08817

Playing Site Phone: 732-985-2487

Tournament Chair: Arman Tookmanian (908)798-7654

Friday, July 18

- | | |
|----------|--|
| New Time | 10:00 AM • Open Stratified Pairs • Stratified 0-499 Pairs*
2:15 PM • Open GRASSROOT Stratified Pairs
• GRASSROOT 499er Stratified Pairs* |
|----------|--|

Saturday, July 19

- | | |
|----------|--|
| New Time | 10:00 AM • Open Stratified Pairs • Stratified 499er Pairs*
2:15 PM • Open GRASSROOT Stratified Pairs
• GRASSROOT 499er Stratified Pairs* |
|----------|--|

*499er events will be held provided there are sufficient pairs

Sunday, July 20

- | | |
|-----------|---|
| 9:30 AM: | • Bagel Breakfast |
| 10:30 AM: | • Playthrough Bracketed Swiss Teams: There will be a short break for lunch and food will be served. |

Stratifications: Open Pairs A (3000+) B (1000-3000) C (0-1000)
 499ers Pairs A (300-499) B (100-300) C (0-100) (May be varied based on participation.)
In pair events, strats are based as an average of the total master points of the pair. In any event or flight with a master point upper limit, no individual's MP total may exceed that limit.

Covid Policies: Masking is optional pursuant to ACBL protocols. Should any bridge player request that players mask at the table, please honor their request.

Parking Policy: No parking in designated spots marked "Reserved" in the Elks parking lot. PARKING IS LIMITED, and carpooling is recommended. There is overflow parking available across the street in an Edison H.S. parking lot.*

Reservation Policy: Reservations are not required for this tournament.

GRASSROOT Games: Almost 30% More Masterpoints

Food and Beverages: Free coffee and limited snacks. Free pizza Friday and Saturday. Bottled water and soda, \$1.00.

Partnerships: We will try to find you partners, but we cannot guarantee them. Please email your request to Arnie Dorin at arnied26@gmail.com or call him at 732-841-2351 by Friday, July 11th. Note that we are much more likely to be able to find a partner for you the EARLIER you make the request.

NJBL Website: Visit our website www.njbl.net to read about upcoming tournaments and events, past results, bridge clubs, THE DECLARER (NJBL's online newsletter), and many other useful bridge links.

Entries: \$34 per pair per session. For non-ACBL members, you MUST sign-up for a free 4-month trial membership to be able to play. In addition, we must charge an extra \$4 per person per session for those whose ACBL membership has expired. \$152 per team for Sunday's Swiss teams' game.

Milestones

Changes in Rank: March 2025 – May 2025

Emerald Life Master

Arnold Kohn	Monroe
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Gold Life Master

Akshay Shah	Somerset
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Ruby Life Master

Jason Tokuda	Livingston
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Silver Life Master

Cooki Gulkin	West Caldwell
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Bronze Life Master

Lynn Goldberg	Morristown
Chris Schwinger	Rockaway

Life Master

Valerie Benton	Berkeley Heights
Abdul Gaffoor	Flanders
L Gail Knight	Chester
Susan Lemkau	Summit
Zhu Liu	Princeton
Chris Schwinger	Rockaway

Adv. NABC Master

Suzanne Fitzsimons	Barneget Light
Carol Pastushok	Princeton
Shashikant Sathaye	Warren
Leigh Walker	Piscataway

NABC Master

Moaiz Daya	Florham Park
Roberta Elliott	South Orange
Laurel Harvey	Princeton
Denise Jasak	Red Bank
Prakash Malkani	East Brunswick
Richard Marcus	Somerset
Shriram Phadke	Plainsboro
Douglas Reeves	Union
Jeff Schreiber	Oceanport
Margery Sloanaker	Chatham

Regional Master

Danette Alderoty	Rumson
Ruth Bronzan	Princeton
James Graef	Toms River
Doris Grzymiski	Chatham
Kuo-Tung Hsu	East Brunswick
Jesse Rockoff	Rahway
Simonne Vaccaro	Neptune City

Sectional Master

Martha Chamberlain	Long Branch
Ellen Ehrlich	Rockaway
Akshay Javeri	Cranbury
Judith Josephson	Randolph
Dylan Lupo	Rahway
Stuart Rice	Basking Ridge
Hal Sprechman	Manchester
Dhiru Vashi	Cranbury
Patty Whittemore	Oceanport

Club Master

Patricia Gaines	Warren
John Gingher	Mantoloking
Candace Shanks	Rockaway

Junior Master

Helen Brown	Bloomfield
Navin Chopra	Warren
Michael Cichetti	Aberdeen
Jane Griffin	Little Silver
Swati Javeri	Cranbury
Millicent Kellner	East Windsor
Zhao Yu Ma	Jersey City
Talal Mahmud	Chatham
Bonnie Mitchell	Bernardsville
Irem Ozbay	Weehawken
Jay Reba	Monroe
Margaret Spencer	Monmouth Bch.
Telechery Sudhakar	Skillman
Earl Sulzbacher	Monroe

REMEMBRANCES

The Board of Directors of the New Jersey Bridge League offer their condolences to the families and friends of the following members of the ACBL Unit 140. They will be missed at our bridge tables. We would like to remember all who support and participate in this great game. Please notify Julie Anderson at Julie17rae@gmail.com of any deaths within our membership; indicate, when known, dates of passing and club(s) attended.

Bob Levinson

d. April 1st, 2025

former Unit 140 board member and frequent player at Monroe