



# THE DECLARER



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## The Declarer

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## When Shove Comes to Push

by Jay Korobow

South Deals

None Vul

			♠ J 10 9 5 4 3
			♥ 9 5
			♦ 8 4
			♣ Q J 7
♠ A Q 7			♠ —
♥ A Q 10			♥ 8 7 6 4 3 2
♦ J	N	E	♦ 10 9 6 2
♣ K 9 8 6 3 2	W	S	♣ A 10 5
			♠ K 8 6 2
			♥ K J
			♦ A K Q 7 5 3
			♣ 4
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♦
Dbl	2 ♠	Pass	4 ♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	

The common trope is “If you talk about what you think will happen if push comes to shove, you are talking about what you think will happen if a situation becomes very bad or difficult.”

South was a fan of Splinters, which might come from pushing a board the wrong way, but also might mean trump support plus shortness in the “splintered” suit. A classic and simple auction would be 1♠ – P – 4♦ showing a singleton Diamond, 4 or more Spades and values for at least game. When the facing hand has xxxx or such opposite the shortness (rather than something like QJx which is wasted), the fit is often magical, and slam might make on less than the normal allotment of high card points.

There are more complex variations afoot, such as a delayed Splinter in an uncontested auction like 1♥ – 1♠ – 2♠ – 4♦. As a 3♦ call would be 100% forcing, there’s no reason not to play 4♦ as a Splinter despite it not being a double jump, which is the rule of thumb for Splinter jumps.

Some players with the North hand might sanely pass over the creative takeout double by West, allowing East to easily bid Hearts, which would likely see East/West reach the makeable 4♥ game. This contract takes some handling versus various leads and defenses, but South’s lack of entries generally allows it to score up in a variety of ways. Over the weak jump shift 2♠ bid that was actually made as illustrated, East reasonably passed, perhaps influenced by their lackluster Heart suit. 4♠ by South should end it all. This is likely to end up down 1, which even if doubled for -100, rates to be a pickup versus the opponents making game.

Although slam was unlikely, South decided a 4♣ call was more attractive than 4♠, thinking of the second example splinter auction above perhaps as a guide to this adventure. North was however on a different page, thinking South might have a hand too meaty for a simple 3♣ call, perhaps ♠ -- ♥ AJ ♦ KJxxxx ♣ AKxxx or such where 4♣ might be just the right spot. Risking partner's wrath, they passed and painfully watched partner take only 2 tricks for down 8, -400!

In the replay comparison, South was heard to mutter "Take this board and SHOVE it" as the embarrassing result of -400 was subsequently revealed. "PUSH BOARD you mean!" declared the serendipitous teammates. "We are plus +400... after 1♦ – 2♣ – P – 3♣, we got to 5♣ and there's no way to set it with the ♥KJ doubleton so nicely slotted!" 5♣ bid and made is of course +400 not vulnerable.

The rule of thumb on Splinters is obvious. Wear gloves when you play them, and maybe earmuffs!

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### Annual Awards Brunch, February 22, 2026

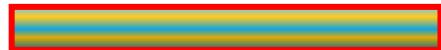
Hanover Manor

East Hanover, NJ

- Recognizing Player of the Year, Mini-McKenney, and Ace of Clubs winners
- Voting on a revision to the Unit by-laws
- Running a Unit championship game
- Enjoying a catered brunch
- All for \$60 per pair

## Young People at the Summer National

*by Jawanza Phoenix*



I am delighted to report that my American Bridge Association (ABA) club (The Plaza in Montclair, NJ) was able to finance eight young people to stay at the hotel and play at the ABA Summer National tournament held at the Sheraton downtown Philadelphia. Udochchi Abengowe, Armani Smith, Momo Sacko, Tamyra Rumble, Autumn Tarver, Mike Morocho, Angel Marquez, and Rian Souffrant, ranged in age from 16 to 20. Five are high schoolers, the other three are in college. All of the young people either attend or attended the Orange STEM Innovation Academy of the Oranges in Orange, NJ. STEM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. At their high school, they all attended an after-school bridge class coordinated by Denise Harlem. They were taught bridge by Denise Harlem, Barbara Clark, Vijay Ahuja, and Aaron Snead. Half of the students had already been to at least one ACBL National tournament where they competed against other kids their age.

Momo and Tamyra performed the best, placing first in two of the pair game events. They were beating people who have been playing for over forty years. Many ABA members were happy to see and play with and against them. In fact, numerous ABA members have begun efforts to raise money to sponsor another eight students to come to the 2026 Summer National tournament in New Orleans.



Center - ABA President Gloria Christler



# Stepping Stone Squeeze

*by Komal Kamat*

To make the following contract required a "Stepping Stone Squeeze". This is where you put one opponent on lead and the other opponent is squeezed by their partner.

Here is the full hand and bidding:

D 12	N undefined	E undefined
	♠K1097	2NT
	♥9	
	♦63	
	♣KJ10764	
W undefined	W N E S	E undefined
♠AJ864	1♠ Pass	2♣ Pass
♥762	2NT Pass	4♠ Pass
♦AK9	Pass	Pass
♣Q3		
S undefined		4♠ West
	♠3	0
	♥QJ1083	0
	♦QJ102	
	♣952	

The 2♦ bid was a general game force. I received a Heart lead that I won with the ♥A. At this point there are several ways to play the hand; I started by taking a losing Spade finesse to North's ♠K, who then helped me out by returning the ♣J which I rolled around to the ♣Q in my hand. Then I played to Dummy's ♠Q and a Spade back to the ♠A. So far all is well.

Now I played a Heart, which Double Dummy says was wrong; and I went down one. Instead, the play should be one round of Diamonds. Then a Club to Dummy's Ace and a Diamond back to the ♦K in hand.

Here is the position after 8 tricks:

The screenshot shows a bridge application interface with four player hands and a bidding history.

- North (N):** undefined. Bids: 10. Hand: ♠10, ♥, ♦, ♣K1076.
- South (S):** undefined. Bids: 6. Hand: ♦K, ♦5, ♦10. (Note: The bidding history shows 6, but the hand itself shows 10, which is likely a bug or a specific rule application.)
- East (E):** undefined. Bids: K54, 87. Hand: ♠, ♥K54, ♦87, ♣.
- West (W):** undefined. Bids: 86, 76, 9. Hand: ♠86, ♥76, ♦9, ♣.

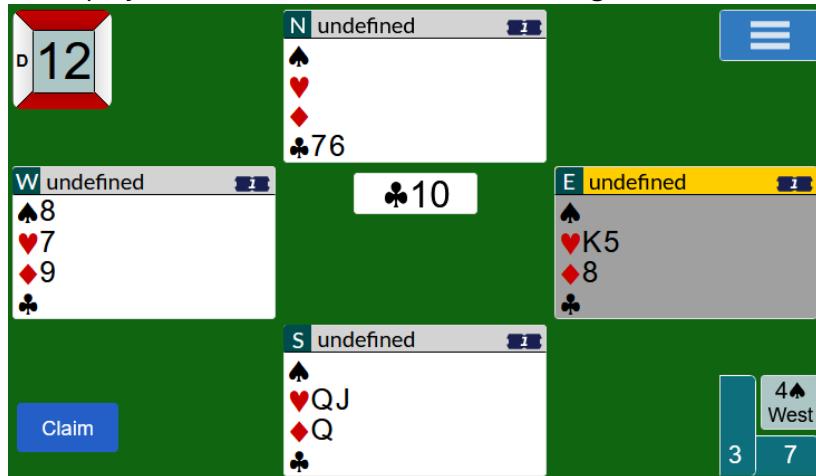
Below the hands, the bidding history is shown:

- 1
- 7
- 4♠
- West

Now we should put North on lead with a Spade to their ♠10. North has nothing except Clubs, South doesn't have any and will get squeezed in the Red suits. On North's ♣K lead, Dummy discards a Diamond. South must

discard Diamonds or else Dummy's Hearts will be good. And Declarer shouldn't ruff this trick! Instead, they should discard a Heart to keep a card in both red suits.

North plays another club and we have following :



Once again, Dummy discards a Diamond and South is stuck. They can't throw their ♦Q or Declarer's ♦9 is good after they ruff the Club with the final trump. And if they let go of one of their Hearts, Dummy's Hearts become good.

This is an example of the Stepping Stone Squeeze, where South was squeezed in the red suits when their partner led Clubs. When I led a Heart at trick 6 in the actual play, the layout was wrong to later setup the squeeze.

## Unit 140 Top Masterpoint Earners at October Sectional

Player	Masterpoint Range		
	0 – 1500 MPs	1500 – 5000 MPs	5000 + MPs
Alex Shih	7.58		
Leigh Walker	7.51		
Zhishen Lin	7.04		
Tianyang Chen		17.29	
Komal Kamat		11.09	
Bob Brolin		10.97	
Jeff Halle		10.97	
Jiang Gu			31.51
Alex Perlin			13.66
Brett Kunin			12.42

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## Lester Sokolower

*by Mark and Lenore Mohr*



I am sad to report the death of my long-time friend and bridge partner, Lester Sokolower, on September 27, 2025, at the age of 94. A one-time New Yorker, he moved to New Jersey some 50 years ago and instantly became the New Jersey Bridge League's leading Life Master, a position he maintained for several decades with his 10,000 plus masterpoints.

In addition to his numerous Sectional wins, he had several Regional titles in pair and team events. His favorite partner over the years, Barbara Tepper, died 2 years ago, but he continued to play with a few lucky partners face-to-face and then online with the onset of covid.

Lester was a true expert. He was an aggressive bidder, an accurate defender, and a "magician" as a declarer. As important, he was a courteous opponent and a player with the highest ethical standards.

# The Art of Cue Bidding/Reliance on Science

by Brett Kunin

Playing at the club some time ago in The Common Game, there was a deal that provided an instructive lesson. After North passes in 1st chair, you open 1♠ with ♠ A876542 ♥ AT9 ♦ Q6 ♣ A. At favorable vulnerability. South passes, and partner bids 4♣, a Splinter bid, showing 4 card trump support, an opening hand or better, and a singleton or Club void. North doubles, and it is your call. We play that in such an auction, a cue bid below game is mandatory, since partner is unlimited, and I therefore bid 4♥, promising either the ♥A or ♥K, and denying a Diamond control. The opponents did no further bidding. Partner, looking at ♠ KQ103 ♥ KQ72 ♦ K985 ♣ 5, has nothing further to say, and bids 4♠, as there could be 2 fast Diamond losers if I did not hold the ♦Q. Since it is virtually impossible to construct an opening hand in which partner did not hold the ♦K, I made a slam try by bidding 5♣, showing the ♣A (bids beyond game show a first round control). Since I could not cue bid 5♣ with 2 small Diamonds (or I held a singleton), partner knows there are not 2 quick Diamond losers, and with excellent Hearts, he bids 6♠, ending the auction.

North	East (You)	South	West (Pard)
Pass	1♠	Pass	4♣ <sup>1</sup>
Dbl	4♥ <sup>2</sup>	Pass	4♠
Pass	5♣ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	6♠
All Pass			

<sup>1</sup> – Splinter

<sup>2</sup> – Below our game, ♥A or ♥K

<sup>3</sup> – Beyond game, ♣A

Opening Lead: ♥4  
Dummy  
 ♠ KQ103  
 ♥ KQ72  
 ♦ K985  
 ♣ 5

Declarer  
 ♠ A876542  
 ♥ A109  
 ♦ Q6  
 ♣ A

Much to my surprise, I get a small Heart lead. I play small from dummy and capture the ♥J with my A♥. I play a Spade to the King, and trumps are 1-1. However, now is not the time to play to the ♣A. Reasoning that my LHO might have led the ♦A if she held it, the time to attempt to steal a Diamond trick is NOW. I therefore led a small Diamond from the table, and after some hesitation, my RHO ducked her ♦A. (Editor's Note: I believe this is a variant of a coup called Morton's Fork). I ultimately pitch my losing Diamond on the 4th Heart, claiming 7 for a cold top on the board.

The full deal:

Dealer: You  
Vul: Both  
Dummy  
 ♠ KQ103  
 ♥ KQ72  
 ♦ K985  
 ♣ 5

LHO  
 ♠ J  
 ♥ 854  
 ♦ J93  
 ♣ 1098764  
RHO  
 ♠ 9  
 ♥ J63  
 ♦ A1052  
 ♣ KQJ32

Declarer  
 ♠ A876542  
 ♥ A109  
 ♦ Q6  
 ♣ A

The board was played 8 times, with only 3 pairs bidding the slam. I learned that one unwise North/South pair found their Club fit and unwise bid 6♣, which, if doubled, would go for -1400, but the East/West pair bid 6♠ over it. Another pair bid Blackwood, discovered they were missing one key card, and “bashed” 6♠ hoping it would make. This could have been a disaster had I not held the ♦Q. Note that in our auction, both my partner and I knew what hands we held in the auction, and that the slam would table.

The hand is a reminder that Blackwood is one of the most overused conventions. It should never be used when you hold a void, or two or more dead cards in a side suit.

## ***Big Games***

(Must be face-to-face to qualify)

September 2025 – November 2025

**OPEN**

77.78%	Jim McCarroll - Barbara Codispoti	Shadowfax
77.13%	Wieslaw Ostrowski - Harris Bobroff	Toms River BC
76.99%	Robin Shamah - Sonia Bibi	Jersey Bridge Club
75.63%	Terrence Havican - Sheila Holderness	Montclair Golf Club
75.31%	Andrew Barlow - Leigh Walker	Summit Area Bridge
73.61%	Richard Ross - Ronald Kraft	Monroe Bridge Club
73.56%	Kuo-Tung Hsu - Chuck Dvorkin	Bill's Bridge
73.02%	Stephen Arshan - Donna Dulet	Spring Lake BC
72.92%	Audrey Egger - Deborah Sack	Bill's Bridge
72.59%	Robert McClanahan - Sarah McClanahan	Canoe Brook
72.32%	Ronald Kraft - Peter Stein	Monroe Bridge Club
72.19%	Tony Lamb - Dorid Lamb	Short Hills
71.98%	Richard Ross - Alex Allen	Jersey Bridge Club
71.73%	Lisa Walsh - Daniel Walsh	Jersey Bridge Club
71.40%	Richard Ross - Alex Allen	Jersey Bridge Club
71.31%	Peter Jones - John Dell'osso	Summit Area Bridge
71.10%	Wieslaw Ostrowski - Harris Bobroff	Toms River BC
70.88%	Robert Derosa - Hans Neuteboom	Toms River BC
70.28%	Harold Shane - Jason Tokuda	Summit Area Bridge
70.27%	Harold Shane - Jason Tokuda	Summit Area Bridge
70.24%	Jody Connors - Leigh Walker	Shadowfax
70.14%	Andrew Barlow - Lawrence Lerner	Summit Area Bridge
70.00%	Beau Norton - Marc Lipman	Stafford Bridge Club

**LIMITED/INVITATIONAL**

78.17%	Bob Welgos - Ginnie Thomas	Shadowfax
75.00%	Jeanne Forti - Agnes Barenti	Westlake BC
74.21%	Shelly Amin - Jerry Seasonwein	Regency at Monroe
73.33%	Sheila McCrossin - Karen Hyatt	Rumson Friday
72.66%	Joseph Juliano – Mike Morter	Bill's Bridge
72.50%	Bob Welgos - Ginnie Thomas	Shadowfax
71.67%	Ken Sherman - Gary Moliver	Westlake BC
71.43%	Arman Tookmanian - Frederick Shubert	Shadowfax
70.20%	Barbara Scammell - Jane Griffin	Queen of Hearts BC
70.20%	Paul Gessman - Michael O'Donohue	Regency at Monroe
70.14%	Marjorie Attalienti - Mary Jo Scotes	Westlake BC
70.00%	Patricia Pritchard - Laura Haaren	Rumson Friday

## Milestones

### Changes in Rank: September 2025 – November

#### Diamond Life Master

Julie Cohan	Woodland Park
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#### Sapphire Life Master

Jason Ji	Jersey City
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#### Gold Life Master

Frank Feng	Basking Ridge
Henry Stadelmann	Mantoloking

#### Ruby Life Master

Jan De Boer	Lawrence
Ginny Mason	Princeton
Joanne Moynihan	Monroe

#### Silver Life Master

Gilbert Meierhans	Metuchen
Ronald Whitney	Bloomfield MI

#### Bronze Life Master

Howard Baum	Randolph
Peter Brudner	Ocean
Stephen Granet	West Orange
Tina Kaplan	Morganville
Simon Thompson	Summit
Yanlai Yang	Jersey City

#### NABC Master

Thomas Lewis	Watchung
Wieslaw Ostrowski	Manchester
William Vamvas	Ocean

#### Regional Master

M David Atkin	Princeton
Lynn Chernuchin	Summit
Pamela Clark	Chatham
Carolyn Gaites	Manasquan
N Srinivasan	Eatontown
Zori Stern	Belle Mead
Esther Tesar	North Brunswick

#### Sectional Master

Tianyang Chen	Princeton
Advait Joshi	Berkeley Heights
Talal Mahmud	Chatham
Rees Morrison	Princeton
Trudy Sarver	Montville

#### Club Master

Jeffrey Benton	Madison
Hien Cardinali	Martinsville
Michael Cichetti	Aberdeen
Jane Griffin	Little Silver
Robin Nolte	New Vernon
Betsy Seligson	Morristown
Leon Stark	North Brunswick
Suzanne Tierney	Rumson
Gudmundur Vigfusson	Nutley
Martin Wolfson	Annandale

#### Junior Master

Mary Cashdollar	Basking Ridge
Patricia Conway	Jackson
Mark Greenquist	Spring Lake
Zhishen Lin	Piscataway
Randy Needham	Livingston
Helaine Perlman	Red Bank
Maureen Warshaw	Middletown

## 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](mailto:Julie17rae@gmail.com) of any deaths within our membership; indicate, when known, dates of passing and club(s) attended.

<b>Rosemarie Halle</b> d. September, 2025 Wife of Unit Board member Jeff Halle	<b>Lester Sokolower</b> d. September, 2025 frequent player at Essex
<b>Ira Tarnow</b> d. August, 2025	<b>Nancy Trabin</b> d. September, 2025 frequent player at Monroe