[Board 11](http://tinyurl.com/y2bke2d3)

**Bidding Commentary**: North opens a routine weak two in 1st seat. Nonvulnerable, this is about the best hand North can have. East passes, as there is simply not enough strength to make a three-level overcall (with another 8 points or so, 3♣ would be acceptable).

South runs into a common problem encountered with strong hands. Often there are many different ways to bid the hand, and it is South’s goal to choose the best path. Here, South has a fit with partner and a strong source of tricks. South needs to know if North has round control of the round suits and strong trumps. For example, If North holds ♠KQxxxx ♥x ♦xx ♣Axxx, then 6♠ is a reasonable contract, depending on a normal ♠/♦ breaks.

One option is to bid 2N, intending to immediately find out about North’s suit quality (note: this is possible due to the Ogust convention). If North has good ♠s, South can cuebid, hoping to hear North bid 4♥. Otherwise, South can stop in 4♠.

Another option is to start with 3♦, forcing. North will show his shape from here with maximum hands, and rebid 3♠ otherwise. South intends to follow up with 4♠, implying a slam try in ♠s with long, strong ♦s. Consider that this makes sense, as with a similar hand without slam going values, South would just bid 4♠ immediately. This allows North to continue bidding with a hand that has some kind of control of the round suits.

Either method is workable – most partnerships will prefer starting with 2N to prevent any ambiguity, keeping South as captain throughout the sequence. Advanced partnerships should prefer starting with 3♦ in order to maintain a dialogue throughout the hand. There is also another subtle reason to starting with 3♦ - it is possible that 6♦ will make rather than 6♠ due to adverse distribution of the cards. By introducing the suit, both partners can be on the same page when considering what contract to bid.

Notice that neither East nor West enter this auction. Despite the leadable suits, there is simply not enough values to withstand being doubled. N/S are in a great position to do this – North’s hand is limited and South can always double for penalty. In the same light, E/W did not sacrifice over 4♠. This auction indicates that E/W likely have a fit (and perhaps a double fit, since ♣s was never mentioned and North has 3♥s). However, both opponents can see the possibility of setting 4♠ given the bad distribution in ♦s. This, in addition to the doubleton and tripleton ♠ holdings, indicate that declaring the hand will result in many losers. Defending may lead to a plus score.

**Play Commentary:**

Declarer: This is a pretty easy deal for declarer. There are three possible top losers (2♥ and the ♣A), in addition to the off-chance of a ♦ ruff. Declarer’s goal is to look for a way to lead the defense away from the latter possibility. Then, he can win, draw trumps, and run the ♦s, claiming the balance of the tricks.

On the ♣A lead, West plays the ♣9. Declarer can play either the ♣K or the ♣4 with little consequence (he always has an entry to the ♦ suit). Playing the ♣K would lead West to think he has a singleton – there would be no other choice than to lead a red suit. So, declarer must play the ♣4. The idea is that West could be stuck with ♣K9 or ♣9, and East may mistakenly continue the suit.

Defense: East rules out a trump lead because the auction suggests declarer doesn’t need to ruff any losers. More than likely it is correct to make an active lead, since the bidding indicates that N/S have good trumps AND a long, strong source of tricks (♦s). Either a low ♥ or a high ♣ are acceptable, but the ♣K is slightly preferred. This allows East to see dummy, try to find partner with a singleton ♣, and try leading a ♥ when the ♣A holds. Note that the ♣K, by agreed convention, asks partner to give count. Leading the ♣A asks for attitude.

West sees the best defense easily. Since the ♣A is cashing and West has two ♥s over the ♥K4 in dummy, a ♥ switch is needed immediately. West’s hope is to immediately take the 1st three tricks and determine from there whether to lead a ♦ or a ♣.

Accordingly, West discourages in ♣s (the 9 is his best chance), North playing the ♣4. East switches with the ♥2, showing count as West wins with the ♥T. While not a terrible return, the best return was the ♥9 – this is because East has a ♦ void, and the bidding implies his count in the ♥ suit. In addition, West will never lead ♥s back because East cannot have the ♥A. Thus, showing count in the ♥ suit is redundant – this is a suit preference situation.

West knows that a 2nd ♥ will cash based on the bidding. It’s still unclear, however, whether to continue with a ♣ or a ♦.

Leading a ♣ works when East started with the ♣AK. Leading a ♦ works when East has a ♦ void. Given East’s ♥ lead, it would appear that he has something like ♠xxx ♥xxx ♦x ♣AKxxxx. Does this make sense?

To some degree. Without thinking, West might worry that the ♣9 was hard to read. This can’t be the case if East has the ♣AK. The ♣9 cannot be discouraging from a tripleton or doubleton, and East would lead the ♣K to find out immediately if these tricks were cashing. In other words, East would have already cashed the ♣K if he had it.

Since a ♣ cannot work, the ♦ return is always right. It is good habit for West to return a high ♦ to indicate he would like the higher side suit (♥s) returned so he can give East yet ANOTHER ruff.

As an aside, in matchpoint scoring, it would be important to consider whether East ACTUALLY has a ♦ void. This would be based on East’s return. Since a ♣ return cannot be right, East’s ♥ return should be suit preference. East can deduce this himself as described above.