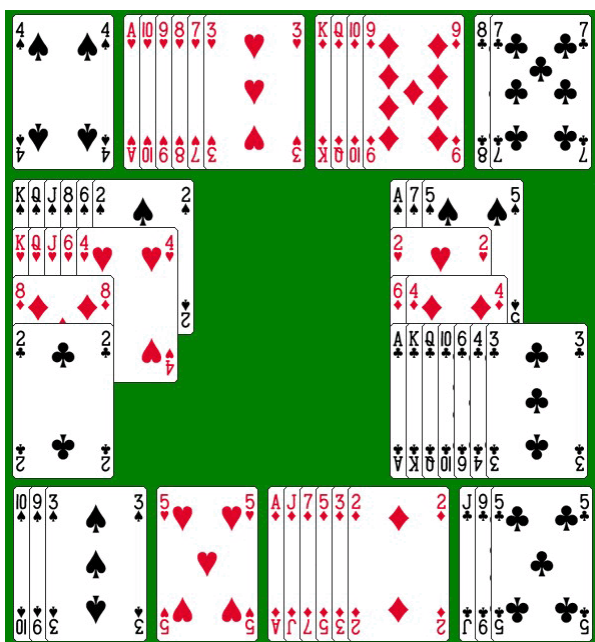


Defenders need to pay attention when the opponents bid 4NT. Doing so and asking what a response to 4NT means, may well make the difference between any subsequent slam succeeding or going off. This happened last Wednesday. Here are the details.



Dealer was South who passed and partner sitting West, opened 1S and North interposed with 2H.

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1 ♠	2 ♥	4NT	Pass
5 ♣	Pass	5 ♠	Pass
6 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass

Suspecting that slam might be on, I bid 4NT. We play Roman Key card so partner responded with 5C showing 1 key card.

I bailed out at 5S because I knew there were 2 key cards missing but partner raised to 6S.

The play began with a lead of the Ace of H which North won, but it was the next play which was critical.

	West	North	East	South
1	4 ♥	*A ♥	2 ♥	5 ♥
2	6 ♠	4 ♠	*A ♠	3 ♠
3	*Q ♠	3 ♥	5 ♠	9 ♠
4	*K ♠	7 ♣	7 ♠	10 ♠
5	2 ♣	8 ♣	*A ♣	5 ♣
6	8 ♦	9 ♦	*K ♣	9 ♣
7	6 ♥	7 ♥	*Q ♣	J ♣
8	J ♥	8 ♥	*10 ♣	2 ♦
9	Q ♥	9 ♥	*6 ♣	3 ♦
10	K ♥	10 ♥	*4 ♣	5 ♦
11	*8 ♠	10 ♦	3 ♣	7 ♦
12	*2 ♠	Q ♦	4 ♦	J ♦
13	*J ♠	K ♦	6 ♦	A ♦

North lead a small Spade which was taken with the Ace and the remaining tricks fell by drawing trumps and running the long Clubs suit allowing West to throw off the Diamond loser.

However, had North played a Diamond in the second lead, the contract would have gone down.

The opponents should have asked during the bidding, what the 5C response to 4NT meant. That way they would have realised that there were 2 key cards missing and when dummy went down, it should have been clear that as well as the AH, the AD was held by the opposition.

Apart from the opponents failing to realise that they had 2 winning tricks, the other problem was that partner (W) raised the contract to slam when I had bailed out. The person who bids 4NT is the 'captain' of the bidding and only he or she should make the decision about the final contract. We were lucky.... this time.

Happy Bridging, Bal