

The background of the cover is a teal color with a faint, white line-art illustration. The illustration depicts a bridge structure on the left and a square quilt block with intricate patterns on the right. The bridge has several arches and a central support. The quilt block is a square with a smaller square in the center, surrounded by various geometric and floral patterns.

David Bird

FAMOUS BRIDGE SWINGS

AN HONORS EBOOK FROM MASTER POINT PRESS

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Introduction

Half a century ago, when I first turned to bridge, it was largely a pastime for gentlefolk. If a writer in *Bridge Magazine* reported a deal from some tournament, they wouldn't dream of naming a declarer who had gone down in a makeable game or slam.

'The South player might have considered the benefit of drawing trumps first,' they would write. The same applied even when the declarer was a top player. The bridge writer would do his colleague, Fred Whittle, a favor by not naming him and expect this favor to be returned in similar circumstances.

Things have changed! You wouldn't expect an American football reporter to write 'With two minutes to go, one of the Raiders' wide receivers dropped a long pass and this cost his side the game.'

Well, it will be the same in this book. The deals are taken from international play and I have named all the players involved, even if they have fallen below their normal wonderful standards. They are the cream of the cream, representing their countries. Everyone knows bridge is a difficult game and that these top players make far fewer errors than the rest of us do. I hope they'll forgive me if I have chosen some instructive deals that are not among their favorite memories.

Much of the material for this book has been extracted from the vugraph archive of the much admired *Bridge Base Online*, which offers live internet coverage of 100s of the world's top tournaments free of charge. I benefited also from software created by my great friend and former partner, Taf Anthias. For example, his program can access the BBO archive and extract 'all Bermuda Bowl swings greater than 14 IMPs'. Marvelous!

Many thanks also to Maureen Dennison, who kindly offered to check the final proof of the book.

DB

1

Going down in a small slam

Suppose you bid a small slam and your opponents at the other table stop in game. The difference between making the slam and going down can be close to 30 IMPs. In this chapter we will see some huge nett swings of this type. Our task will be to decide whether the failing slam should have been made.

In 1970, a high-scoring deal arose in the European Junior Championship. England faced Italy on this deal:

N/S Vul.	♠ A 8											
Dealer South	♥ Q 5											
	♦ A K 9 7 2											
	♣ K J 9 4											
♠ 10 9 5 4 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 6	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ K 6 4		♥ A 9 8 7										
♦ Q J 10 5 4		♦ 8 6 3										
♣ –		♣ 10 7 3 2										
	♠ K Q J 2											
	♥ J 10 3 2											
	♦ –											
	♣ A Q 8 6 5											

Table 1:

West	North	East	South
<i>Generali</i>	<i>Morris</i>	<i>Franco</i>	<i>Smith</i>
–	–	–	1 ♣
1 ♦	2 ♦	pass	2 ♠
pass	3 ♣	pass	4 ♣
pass	4 ♦	pass	5 ♣
pass	6 ♣	all pass	

Should the Italian West find a heart lead? He could be fairly sure that South did not hold the ♥A, since he would then have cue-bid 4♥ over 4♦. Perhaps he assumed that North must hold the ♥A to justify his raise to 6♣.

Smith, the English declarer, was favored with a lead of the ♦Q. He won in the dummy, throwing a heart, and played the ♣K, West showing out.

After playing dummy's remaining diamond winner, for a second heart discard, he tried to discard one of dummy's hearts on the spades. East was happy to ruff the third spade and cash the ♥A for one down.

Do you see a better way to play the slam? You should ruff the diamond opening lead in the South hand. You then cross to the ♠A and ruff a second diamond in hand. All that remains is to draw trumps and claim the slam. Six side-suit winners, four trumps and two diamond ruffs in the South hand add up to twelve – a fairly straightforward dummy reversal.

There were strange happenings at the other table:

Table 2:

West	North	East	South
<i>Burton</i>	<i>Dato</i>	<i>Clark</i>	<i>Capodaglio</i>
–	–	–	2♣
pass	2NT	pass	3♦
dbl	rdbl	all pass	

The Roman 2♣ opening showed 12-16 points and a three-suited hand. 2NT asked for the short suit, which turned out to be diamonds. When the 3♦ response was doubled, the Italian North expressed the view that nine tricks would be possible for North/South in diamonds.

Declarer won the spade lead with dummy's ace and led the ♥Q to East's ace. Winning the spade return in his hand, declarer played a second heart to West's king. A spade was ruffed in dummy and overruffed. The defenders continued to cross-ruff and picked up a penalty of 2,200 for 4 down redoubled.

NETT SWING -20 IMPs

With a certain game (at least) available for North/South, it was a questionable decision by Dato to ask partner to make nine tricks in diamonds instead. However Signor Capodaglio was not entirely without blame. Had he played ace, king and another trump after winning the spade lead, he would have gone only one down (losing three trumps and two hearts).

Would you have found the winning line on this slam from the 1999 Venice Cup – the women's world championship? Denmark faces Canada.

Both Vul. ♠ K 8 7 6 5 4 3
Dealer East ♥ 8 3
 ♦ A K
 ♣ J 6

♠ Q J 9 ♥ Q 4 ♦ J 6 ♣ K Q 10 8 4 3	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 10 ♥ K 9 7 6 5 2 ♦ 9 5 2 ♣ 9 7 2
---	--	---

♠ A 2
 ♥ A J 10
 ♦ Q 10 8 7 4 3
 ♣ A 5

West	North	East	South
<i>Cilleborg</i>	<i>Reus</i>	<i>Bilde</i>	<i>Gordon</i>
–	–	pass	1♦
2♣	2♠	pass	2NT
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	5♦	pass	6♦
pass	6♠	all pass	

A classic bidding sequence by the Canadian women left North in 6♠. Aware that dummy's diamond suit might soon provide some discards, East had to choose an attacking lead in hearts or clubs. As the cards lie, the lead of either suit would set up a defensive winner. Trine Bilde quite rightly chose clubs, since there was more chance that a second round of hearts could be ruffed. How would you play the spade slam after this lead?

Declarer won with dummy's ♣A and played the ace and king of trumps, finding a 3-1 break. He cashed the ♦A-K and crossed to dummy with the ♥A. To discard a heart and a club now, declarer now needed West to follow to the ♦Q. The Bridge Gods did not oblige. West ruffed the third diamond, declarer throwing a club, and a heart trick put the slam one down.

The winning line is to reach your hand with the ♠K, unblock the ♦A-K and return to dummy with the ♠A. You can then discard a club on the ♦Q. West is welcome to ruff with the ♠Q because you can return to dummy with the ♥A to discard your heart loser on the fourth round of diamonds.

Denmark stopped in game (1♦-1♠-2♦-4♠) and Canada lost 13 IMPs instead of gaining the same number.

NETT SWING
-26 IMPs

The champion teams of Europe's top eight bridge nations contested the 2016 European Champions Cup. When Allegra (Italy) faced Riehm (France), this big deal arose:

Both Vul.	♠ K 3										
Dealer West	♥ A 9 7 5 4 3										
	♦ Q 7										
	♣ 8 7 6										
♠ Q 10 9 5	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A J 8 7 6 4 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 8 6 2		♥ K Q 10									
♦ 10 4		♦ 6									
♣ K J 10 9		♣ Q 3									
	♠ -										
	♥ J										
	♦ A K J 9 8 5 3 2										
	♣ A 5 4 2										

West	North	East	South
<i>Brenner</i>	<i>Duguet</i>	<i>Bocchi</i>	<i>Riehm</i>
pass	2♦	3♠	5♦
5♠	pass	pass	6♦
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

At the other table South had made 600 made in 5♦. (West led the ♠10 and East rose with the ♠A, setting up the ♠K for a club discard.) Here the French North opened a multi 2♦, showing a weak-two in one of the majors. When West's 5♠ ran back to Franck Riehm in the South seat, he assessed the prospects in 6♦ as worth more than the penalty expected against 5♠ doubled. Norberto Bocchi doubled the diamond slam and then had to find an opening lead.

How would you play the contract when East leads the ♥K? Declarer won with the ♥A and ruffed a heart with the ♦8, Bocchi following with the ♥Q to disguise the fact that the suit was breaking 3-3. If declarer had continued with a low trump, finessing the ♦7 to obtain an extra entry, he could have established the hearts and returned to dummy with the ♦Q. This would have given him an overtrick, a score of 1740 and a swing of 15 IMPs.

When Riehm preferred to duck a round of clubs, Diego Brenner won in the West seat and returned another club to dummy's ace. Declarer could still follow the winning line. He led the ♦2 and... rose with dummy's ♦Q. The ♦10 did not fall from East and the slam was two down for a loss of 11 IMPs, where 15 IMPs might have been gained.

Riehm's chosen line of play was against the odds. Finessing would win against $\spadesuit 10-4$ or $\spadesuit 10-6$ with West. Playing to drop the $\spadesuit 10$ would win only against $\spadesuit 6-4$. Maybe declarer was convinced that hearts would not split 3-3 and wanted to avoid going another 300 down. Let's not forget to congratulate Bocchi for dropping the $\heartsuit Q$!

NETT SWING
-26 IMPs

Our next exhibit comes from a play-off semi-final between Stuart and Mathe to see who would face the Aces to represent the USA in the 1972 Olympiad:

N/S Vul.	\spadesuit A Q 6										
Dealer South	\heartsuit Q J 7 6 5 3										
	\diamondsuit -										
	\clubsuit A 8 4 3										
\spadesuit J 10 7 5 2	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="width: 20px; height: 20px;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		\spadesuit 9 8 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
\heartsuit A K 4 2		\heartsuit 10									
\diamondsuit 10 9 4		\diamondsuit A K J 8 7 5									
\clubsuit J		\clubsuit 9 7 2									
	\spadesuit K 3										
	\heartsuit 9 8										
	\diamondsuit Q 6 3 2										
	\clubsuit K Q 10 6 5										

Table 1:

West	North	East	South
<i>Kay</i>	<i>Altman</i>	<i>Kaplan</i>	<i>Stuart</i>
-	-	-	pass
pass	1 \heartsuit	3 \diamondsuit	pass
pass	dbl	pass	5 \clubsuit
pass	6 \clubsuit	all pass	

Steve Altman's raise to 6 \clubsuit seems exaggerated, facing a passed hand that had nothing to say over 3 \diamondsuit . Norman Kay led the $\heartsuit K$, requesting a count signal from his partner. Edgar Kaplan played the $\heartsuit 10$ (compatible with a doubleton) and declarer the $\heartsuit 9$.

Even if Kay thought the odds were high that declarer held the singleton heart, he might have reasoned that the best chance of beating the club slam was to play another heart. No, he switched to a spade. How would you aim to take advantage of this as declarer?

The slam can be made by scoring three spade tricks and all nine trumps separately on a cross-ruff. You win with the $\spadesuit K$ and cash two more spades,

LEARN FROM THEIR MISTAKES

After a hard-fought match or perhaps a week-end of matchpoint play, it is well worth the effort to look at all your bad boards and see if any lessons can be learned.

In this book you will have the chance to learn from other players' mistakes. We will look at over 150 big swings from international play. The nett swings will average over 18 IMPs per deal, with some of more than 30 IMPs. Every deal will illustrate at least one important point of bidding, play or defense. By analyzing how and why the great stars of the game went wrong, you will have the chance to put your own game in order.

To get the maximum benefit from the book, you should ask yourself: 'Would I have made that mistake?' or perhaps 'Why was West's 5♠ bid wrong?' Don't just accept the writer's verdict as to who was at fault. Bridge is a game of opinions. Sometimes a player's action is clearly right or wrong. When it's a close decision, even expert opinions may vary.

The purpose of the book is not solely to improve your game. The deals are entertaining in their own right. We all make mistakes, occasionally horrific ones, and it's reassuring to see that even the greatest players occasionally do the same!



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the world's most prolific bridge writer, with more than 135 books to his name. David has regular columns in the ACBL *Bridge Bulletin*, *BRIDGE Magazine*, *English Bridge*, *Australian Bridge* and other periodicals around the world. He is married with a daughter, a son and two grandchildren.

