

Cats and Dogs



By Rikard Greenberg, House Cat

Yesterday I switched on the telly to check out the live show of "Kittens on parade" and what do I see instead? A program rescheduling meant that it had been replaced by a silly thriller with a German shepherd dog starring as some sort of pathetic Sherlock Holmes impersonation.

Honestly!! A German Shepherd dog!! Pray tell, since when the immensely useful talent of rounding sheep has ever helped anyone to solve a crime? If it did, why stop there? Maybe we should short-list top performers in "One Man and his Dog" for high level positions in Scotland Yard? The problem, unfortunately, is not just with the television: look at the last 50 years or so and tell me what was the last Hollywood movie with a cat as a protagonist?

The truth is that we need a good Public Relations agent. Well, us cats I mean.

You may think that I am slightly biased but how can anyone fail to see that cats are way better than dogs?

We are only interested in a relationship of equals with our food providers. As long as you feed us properly, give us enough suitable furniture to sharpen our nails on, scratch our chin when we feel like letting you, play with us when we want and let us sleep in your beds, we happily let you go on thinking that we need you and not viceversa.

It is true that our hobbies do not include elevated pursuits like sniffing other dogs' "natural deposits" or running all over the place to fetch a plastic ball but, whenever we do not practice our beauty sleep, we are known to indulge in a little piano playing, some furniture climbing, a spot of creative typing on computer keyboards or

typewriters and some of us can even play bridge!!!

Right, bridge! To prove the point, here is a hand I declared not so long ago in the regional final of the Feline Pairs Championship.

Dlr South – All Vul

♠ 86	
♥ K10764	
♦ KJ6	
♣ 743	
N W E S	
♠ A7	
♥ A	
♦ AQ10872	
♣ AQ106	

The bidding

West	North	East	South
	Prissy		Myself
			1♦
Pass	1♥	2♠(1)	3♣
Pass	3♦	Pass	6♦
Pass	Pass	Pass	
<i>(1) Weak</i>			

I was holding the South hand and I needed all the tops I could get to make up for some rather poor early rounds, so I crossed my paws and punted the slam.

I got the ♠2 lead and when dummy came down I could see that probably most pairs would be in three no-trump and that, unless I made 6♦, I was going to get a big fat zero and wave goodbye to the few chances we still had of qualifying for the National final.

I won East's ♠J with the ace and cashed the ace of hearts. I entered dummy with the ♦K and pitched my losing spade on the ♥K, West playing the ♥Q. Still unsure as to which finesse to play for, I led a club from dummy and that's when the ♣K obligingly appeared from East. Up to now it seemed almost too easy.

How would you continue?

Well, I had almost taken the ♣A out to capture the King when I realized that the hand had not become any simpler. The problem is that the only way to make 6♦ was to trump one of my losing clubs in dummy, which is not as straightforward as it looks.

If trumps were 2=2, I had to play a second round of diamonds and then ruff my fourth

club with dummy's remaining trump. However, if I played a second trump and trumps split 3=1 then, if the player who won the third round of clubs had a trump left, he could lead it to prevent me from ruffing the fourth club and scuttle the contract.

On the other hand if I played the queen of clubs and another club I would make the hand whenever trumps were 3=1 and the club length was with the long trumps but I would go down if East had started with two diamonds and only one club. The latter was a distinct possibility since the vulnerable 2♠ weak jump overcall in the sandwich position looked to have been based on some wild distribution, especially after West had to follow with the ♥Q to the second round of hearts. It seemed very likely that East was 6=4 or even 6=5 in the majors.

The more I thought about it, the least I liked it.

How to guess what to do? Play a second round of diamonds or continue with the queen and another club?

I kept dithering until all of a sudden the solution to this impossible dilemma hit my head like the proverbial apple: why not duck the king of clubs? After all I had to concede a club eventually, why not the ♣K?

I could then ruff with a high trump whatever East returned and play a second round of diamonds to see if they split. If they did, fine. I would ruff my fourth club in dummy. If they didn't, I could play ♣A, ♣Q and ruff the last club with dummy's ♦6. I could then ruff high my exit card from dummy and take the last trump out to make the slam.

This was the complete layout:

♠ 86			
♥ K10764			
♦ KJ6			
♣ 743			
♠ K102		N	♠ QJ9543
♥ Q3		W E	♥ J9852
♦ 953		S	♦ 4
♣ J9852			♣ K
♠ A7			
♥ A			
♦ AQ10872			
♣ AQ106			

Now you tell me which sheep rounding, tail wagging, ball fetching dog could have worked all that out?