Timing is everything



By Rikard Greenberg, House-Cat

One of the latest issues of "Cats Weekly" has an interesting feature on how regular meals can almost guarantee a long and healthy life for your average feline.

I must admit that Hana, my human foodprovider, does not often give me reasons for complaint on this issue and I am happy to bestow upon her the occasional purr to signify my appreciation for her efforts. Lately however her work seems to be slipping: breakfast milk is just a tad too cold, afternoon meals are sometimes 5-10 minutes late and service in general takes a definite downturn when she hosts her twice weekly bridge afternoons.

Take last Thursday, for instance.

I woke up around 2 pm rather groggy after the previous night celebrations for the start of the Chinese year of the cat and I dragged myself rather gingerly to my food corner for a light snack. To my utter astonishment I saw there that yesterday's half-eaten tuna steak was still in my plate!

I stormed into the living room and found Hana and her friends happily giggling away, sipping tea and exchanging gossip while playing bridge. "This is hopeless" I thought to myself "She won't get up until the game is finished".

I noticed to my relief that the rubber was almost over so there was nothing to do but to sit and wait.

The next hand was dealt and bid with commendable speed:

West	North	East	South
Sonia	Liora	Ruth	Hana
	2♣	Pass	3♣*
Pass	4♣	Pass	4NT*
Pass	5♣*	Pass	5NT*
Pass	6♥*	Pass	6NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

3♣ was alerted as showing at least an ace and a king or 8+ points and 5+ clubs 4NT was Roman Key card Blackwood in clus and the response of 5♣ showed 0-3 Aces out of 5 (counting the ♣K as the fifth ace).

5NT asked for Kings and 6♥ showed 2. West led the ♥K and as soon as dummy was tabled I could see that Hana was not at all happy, so I jumped on the cupboard behind her to see what all the fuss was about.

These were her combined hands:

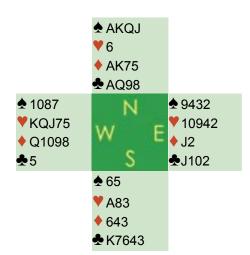


I could see what the problem was: if the clubs split normally she could easily make 7 clubs ruffing a heart in dummy.

Shaking her head wistfully, she took the VK with her VA and quickly started cashing her clubs, noting that everyone followed to the first round.

On the second round West showed out and Hana suddenly realized that the fourth trick had to be won perforce by dummy, with no further entry back to hand to cash the remaining club.

Here is the complete hand:



Lamenting her bad luck, Hana sullenly cashed her high cards hoping for an impossible discarding catastrophe and then sadly conceded the one down.

I had to share her grief since I could see that the failure to make the contract meant that the rubber was not over yet and a much longer wait for my grumbling stomach.

The next few hands were uneventful and my thoughts went back to the 6NT.

Was there a way to make it after all? Of course there was!

One of the fundamental axioms of bridge reminds us that "It is vital to make a plan at trick one".

This is a great hand to demonstrate how, even when the first action looks completely obvious, it is very wise to pause and heed such advice.

If Hana had stopped for a moment and concentrated on the task at hand rather than day-dreaming on the might-have-been of getting to a cold grand slam, she would have seen the potential blockage in diamonds and realized that the only way to avoid that danger is to simply duck the *K! She can now pitch on the *A that troublesome fourth club from dummy, claim her twelve tricks and finally get going with preparing me some tasty morsels for me to feast on.

Well, the whole incident gave me an idea for another important axiom :

"If you are going to misplay a hand and delay the end of a rubber, make sure that your cat has been well fed before!".

