

# THE SLOW LANE AWARDS FOR OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT

By David J. Weiss

**E**ach spring the World's attention is drawn toward the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, as film lovers wait to see whether it will be Denzel or Anthony, Emma or Debra who will be honoured for the year's best achievement in that medium. Capturing somewhat less attention than the Oscar ceremonies is a slightly smaller, but no less exciting, fete taking place only a few blocks away. An Elmer award (named for E. Fudd, one of our most successful graduates) is a source of great pride to the deserving winner...

...The world of bridge has other annual awards, of course. But the 'Romex award for best auction' and others of that ilk have little relevance here. Can you really see Marshall or Marcia winning one of those? No, our glittering prizes are given for dramatically poor achievements. Those we can win. But it's not as easy as you might think. After all, bridge at any level is a game of blunders. In order to win one of the designated Elmers, a player must do something clever, even elegant.

And so, without further ado, let's get on with the presentations. The Maginot prize for the worst defence went to Rick for this effort:

### Game All. Match Points.

♠ Q643  
♥ 872  
♦ 92  
♣ AJ63

*Rick*

♠ K75  
♥ J53  
♦ 53  
♣ Q10985

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	1♠	2♣	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

West led the diamond ace and king, on which Rick carefully echoed as declarer followed with the eight and jack. On the shift to the spade ace, Rick played an in-tempo five, thus earning the award.

What's that you say? It's the right play? You want partner to revert to diamonds so you can beat the contract two? It didn't

work out that way. Proudly remembering the auction, Marshall expected East to have four diamonds and five clubs. He switched to a club. South won in hand and cashed all of the red winners; Rick was squeezed out of the spade king he had denied holding.

♠ Q643  
♥ 872  
♦ 92  
♣ AJ63

♠ A982  
♥ 106  
♦ AK764  
♣ 72

	N		
W		E	
	S		

♠ K75  
♥ J53  
♦ 53  
♣ Q10985

♠ J10  
♥ AKQ94  
♦ QJ108  
♣ K4

The Balfour prize for unfortunate declaration was captured by Marcia for managing to take seven tricks in this 3NT contract. Her excuse was that it was a pairs contest, so she was trying to take lots of tricks. That sounded plausible to me.

### East/West Game. Match Points.

♠ 754  
♥ QJ92  
♦ 2  
♣ KQ1064

	N		
W		E	
	S		

♠ J  
♥ K1054  
♦ Q543  
♣ J952

♠ AK1086  
♥ 76  
♦ J986  
♣ 73

♠ Q932  
♥ A83  
♦ AK107  
♣ A8

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT(i)
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♠
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

(i) 15-17

With all four hands exposed, you may find it hard to see how a competent South managed to take only seven tricks on the lead of a small diamond. Work it out if you can; perhaps next year, you might win an Elmer!

I'm sure you didn't solve this dummy problem. South won the diamond king and cashed three rounds of clubs, with East releasing a heart and declarer a spade. Then she ran the queen of hearts, which held. On the next heart, East showed out. Desperately, declarer took the ace and exited with her last heart. West cashed two hearts and the club jack, pressuring the South hand. So declarer scored three clubs, two hearts, and two diamonds.

The Sir Stephen prize for foulest bidding went to Andrew and Ann for this sparkling grand slam:

### East/West Game. IMPs.

♠ KJ2  
♥ K7  
♦ AKJ9873  
♣ 3

♠ A974  
♥ 5  
♥ 105  
♣ AKQ864

West	North	East	South
1♦	Pass	2♣(i)	Pass
3♦(ii)	Pass	3♠	Pass
3NT	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥(iii)	Pass	4♠(iii)	Pass
6♦	Pass	7♦	All Pass

- (i) Forcing to game
- (ii) Solid suit  
(well, it looked good at the time)
- (iii) Cue bid.

Andrew's optimistic 3♦ call and Italian cuebid induced Ann to take the final step over the precipice. She avoided the Roman Key Card trap over 4♥; the 5♠ response would have led to the supreme annoyance of having to bid the slam knowing the partnership was missing an ace and the trump queen, albeit with at least nine trumps. This way Ann could be happy until the opening lead appeared.

But the result was a push. The prize-winning auction sounded so convincing that

North, holding three diamonds to the queen and the heart ace, failed to double. At the other table, the second-best game contract was reached, but it didn't come off.

♠ Q1083			
♥ A10943			
♦ Q64			
♣ 9			
♠ KJ2		♠ A974	
♥ K7		♥ 5	
♦ AKJ9873		♦ 105	
♣ 3		♣ AKQ864	
	♠ 65		
	♥ QJ862		
	♦ 2		
	♣ J10752		

West	North	East	South
1♦	1♥	Dble(i)	3♥(ii)
3NT	All Pass		

- (i) Negative, and bizarre, but remember where we are  
(ii) Pre-emptive

The vigorous enemy competition forced difficult decisions upon both West and East, and as people are wont to do, they opted for 3NT. It looked pretty likely to succeed, at least, but the foul breaks led to defeat after a low heart lead. I'm sure the Editor would like to entertain discussion of how the contract is makeable, but the actual declarer simply tested diamonds, then clubs, and finally failed when the spade finesse lost.

The capstone of the evening was the presentation of the Thing prize for hand of the year. This most coveted of Elmers ascends an individual winner and there must be all-round achievement: questionable bidding, weak defence, and horrendous declarer play. The deal arose during an autumn hair colour grudge match:

### North/South Game. IMPs.

♠ AK9764			
♥ 954			
♦ K8			
♣ J6			
♠ QJ			♠ 53
♥ KQ107			♥ A82
♦ A105			♦ J632
♣ K752			♣ 9843
			♠ 1082
			♥ J63
			♦ Q974
			♣ AQ10

West	North	East	South
1♣	1♠	2♣	2♠
3♣	3♠	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

For the blondes, Barbie led a fourth best club deuce. The raven haired declarer, Ken called for the jack from dummy, and deceptively overtook with the queen as East, Cameron, showed count by smoothing his golden locks and playing the nine. A diamond was led toward the king, but West hopped up. The switch to the heart seven followed. East took the ace and promptly shot back a club.

How many of the atrocities did you spot? The seemingly worst play was East's club return, which could not succeed. There is no club holding declarer might have which will allow the defence to obtain three more tricks in that suit, unless partner has the ace and king. But if that were the case, the auction had told West to cash from the top.

So that means that Ken handled the club suit incorrectly. Had he played low from dummy and won the ten, Cameron might have had a guess. South might have been dealt ♣ K10x and a heart stopper; then a club return would not be necessary.

**D**oes that mean that Barbie erred in not returning the heart king before playing the seven? True, that would have been more informative. But that would not have been a good play if East had only two hearts. West's bad play came earlier, when she led a club rather than a top heart.

In fact, once West led the foolish club, South could have, and should have, made the contract without any defensive errors. The auction marks West with the diamond ace and probably the four-card heart holding, along with the club king evinced at trick one. Therefore, if South simply cashes six spade tricks, West will have to surrender (ooh!). With six cards remaining in West's hand, she must hold onto the diamond ace and the guarded club king. This leaves a maximum of three hearts. Once the heart has been surrendered, declarer knocks out the diamond ace and scores the contract.

Did you crime South's bidding? Not with spades splitting! Note that the bold game had a better chance to make than the paltry part score, which would have been down off the top.