

## THE MOYSIAN FIT

Reg Busch



The name Alphonse Moyse Jr would mean little to today's generation of bridge players. But, starting in the 1930s, he was a champion bridge player and a prolific and influential bridge journalist. He was reputed to have written two bridge columns every day for 22 years, most of these as 'ghost' writer for the Culbertsons. In those days of opening 4 card majors, he was a proponent of supporting partner's one major opening with three cards in his suit. His name still lives when bridge writers talk of playing in a 'Moysian' fit i.e. in a 4 / 3 fit.

Whether he would be such an advocate in these days of computer generated hands is a matter of conjecture. But the fact still remains that, not infrequently, we find that 4H or 4S in a 4/3 fit is the only makeable contract.

So don't be afraid of finishing in a 4/3 fit if it seems your best spot. But it would be helpful to understand that there is a secret to playing these hands. Here is an example from a hand played recently in a Florida event.

| W        | N  | E  | S  |
|----------|----|----|----|
|          | 1♣ | 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 2♦       | 2♥ | P  | 4♥ |
| All pass |    |    |    |

|           |        |         |  |
|-----------|--------|---------|--|
| Dlr North | ♠KQ72  |         |  |
| NS vul    | ♥A95   |         |  |
|           | ♦43    |         |  |
|           | ♣K1074 |         |  |
| ♠965      |        | ♠J104   |  |
| ♥Q104     |        | ♥J73    |  |
| ♦KJ972    |        | ♦AQ1086 |  |
| ♣63       |        | ♣A2     |  |
|           | ♠A83   |         |  |
|           | ♥K862  |         |  |
|           | ♦5     |         |  |
|           | ♣QJ985 |         |  |

North's 2♥ bid with his 3 card suit is questionable. No doubt his original plan was to rebid 1♣, but perhaps he thought that, with the bidding at the two level, his minimal hand did not justify bidding 2♣. Whatever, South now has to make 4H.

The defence started with two rounds of diamonds, with South ruffing the second. Now came rule one: *before touching trumps, set up your side suit*. So South played on clubs. East won the ♣A, and returned a club.

Now for rule two: *if you may have to lose a trump, lose it early*. For example, here if declarer plays ♥K, ♥A, then another, West will win the ♥Q and cash defenders diamonds. So South must duck a round of trumps. He then wins any return, draws the remaining trumps and cashes out for 10 tricks.

So you need a bit of luck in these contracts. The suit usually needs to break 3/3. This should occur about 35% of the time. But, in these days of computer generated hands, my version of Sod's Law is that 3/3 breaks occur only when you don't need them!

Did you see how the defence could have prevailed? Giving a ruff and discard is regarded as a major defensive crime. But, if East, on winning the ♣A, returns a *third* diamond he gives South a ruff and discard. Whatever hand South wins in, he now can't duck a trump because a *fourth* diamond will prevent South from drawing the remaining trumps. So a ruff and discard twice would have defeated the contract.

Notice that neither 3NT nor 5C will make. 4H makes except against hard to find defence, and 4S will always make, because South doesn't need to duck a trump. Getting to 4S is another matter.

The lesson here is to be aware that a 4/3 fit in a major may well be a good spot, and particularly in a part score competitive situation. Particularly so when the hand with three trumps is short in opponents' suit. But be aware of the different technique in playing such hands.

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