

Remembering Tim

Tim Seres died last week (September 2007) in Sydney, aged 82. From 1947, when he migrated from Hungary, until the early 90s, he compiled a list of bridge successes that is unmatched in this country. As Denis Howard said in his eulogy, "Tim was one of the huge natural talents that very occasionally surface in competitive endeavours. Don Bradman as a cricketer is a convenient analogy."

In the 1960s and 70s, Tim was the linchpin of the Australian national team. Still, his main love was for rubber bridge. Most afternoons he would be at the Double Bay Bridge Centre playing 50 or so deals of rubber bridge for decent stakes. Players were drawn in by his charisma and style. It always felt like a special occasion at Tim's table, whether you were playing with him, against him, or one of the gallery. Besides bridge, his other great interest was horse racing. Perhaps it was because his main interests were related to gambling that he was a creature of habit in his private life. The certainty of one balanced the uncertainty of the other. In any case, you would always know where to find Tim depending on the day of the week and the time of day.

Today's deals feature Tim as declarer at the rubber bridge table in the early 70s.

West deals, East-West vulnerable

	♠ A 4	
	♥ Q 10 7 6 5	
	♦ 6 4	
	♣ Q 8 6 3	
♠ Q 10 9 6		♠ 8
♥ A J 4		♥ 9 8 3
♦ Q 8 5		♦ A 10 7 3
♣ A K 5		♣ J 10 7 4 2
	♠ K J 7 5 3 2	
	♥ K 2	
	♦ K J 9 2	
	♣ 9	

West	North	East	South
1NT	pass	pass	3♠
Dbl	pass	pass	pass

You can play the hand in Bridge Solver [here](#).

That is a brazen three spade bid from Tim, but he liked to make preempts and jump bids on a wide variety of hands. At first glance it appeared that he was booked to lose three aces and two trump tricks for one down, but Tim made one of West's trump tricks disappear. West led the king of clubs followed by the ace of hearts, Tim dropping the king. West now shifted to a diamond to East's ace and a diamond came back. Tim won the king and played the two of hearts to the queen and ruffed a club. Next, he ruffed a diamond in dummy and a club in hand. He crossed to the now bare ace of spades and ruffed a heart. By now everyone was down to three cards. Tim held ♠KJ, ♦J. He led the ♦J and West, who had nothing but trumps, was forced to ruff and lead around to the ♠K.

The next deal is vintage Seres.

North deals, neither side vulnerable

	♠ A Q 7 6 5 2	
	♥ Q	
	♦ 10 7 6 4	
	♣ 9 3	
♠ K 9 8		♠ J 10 3
♥ 10 9 8		♥ 5 4 2
♦ Q 9 5 3		♦ A K J
♣ A 5 4		♣ Q 10 8 6
	♠ 4	
	♥ A K J 7 6 3	
	♦ 8 2	
	♣ K J 7 2	

West	North	East	South
	pass	pass	4♥
pass	pass	pass	

First it is the opening bid – more of his free-flowing preemptive style – then it is the play. The contract can be defeated any number of ways, but Tim found a subtle play that quietly encouraged the opponents to set up a position from which they could not recover.

West led a heart. Tim won and played a diamond from dummy! East won the king and shifted to the ten of clubs, a play that suggested he held the queen, not the ace. Tim covered with the jack and West took the ace. West now exited with a diamond. East took the ace and continued with the jack. Now the defence was dead. Tim ruffed and ran the rest of the trumps coming down to three cards. Neither defender could hang on to three spades. West had to keep the queen of diamonds and East had to keep the best club, so Tim made his contract by taking the spade finesse and running the spades.

As Tim said, “All they had to do was solve the club finesse for me, isolate the diamond menace and stay off the spades. After that it was easy!”