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Intro to Stayman part 2

Stayman Part 2 (SA)	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: None

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	2NT	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ K

This hand is very similar to that played in the last series - a maximum 1NT opener with 4-4 in the majors.

The bidding here requires the 1NT opener to visualize Pard's hand. When we show our Heart suit in response to 2♣ (bidding Up the Line), Pard bids 2NT. Since he uses Stayman in the first place, he's gotta have a major. It ain't Hearts, so guess what it is! He is also making an invitational bid so, unless he's nuts, probably has around the 8-9 point mark.

We need to correct to Spades, as we know of a 4-4 major suit fit and have hopes to use dummy for some *trumping* or *dumping*. Note that a 3♠ bid by us would suggest a minimum hand. Because we are maximum we have to jump to game in Spades. Our deductive skills pay off. We are indeed better off in a suit, and in game to boot.

Our Count and Plan shows that we need to use our trumps independently to scrounge up enough tricks. Our plan is fairly simple: We are going to ruff our losing Hearts on table having taken out the two top trumps.

We duck the first Heart trick, winning the second which gives us control of the suit. We pull two rounds of trumps and begin the plan of ruffing losers on table.

West stoically follows suit until the near the very end, when he is forced on lead with his master trump and must play a club. Since West holds the ♣Q, that makes our ♣J a winner, giving us an unexpected overtrick.

Not bad!! (By the way, notice what a disaster this would be in No-trumps. Good for Stayman.)

North  
♠ A863  
♥ 64  
♦ A765  
♣ J52

West  
♠ JT2  
♥ KQJ7  
♦ 943  
♣ QT7



East  
♠ Q9  
♥ T93  
♦ QJT2  
♣ 9863

South  
♠ K754  
♥ A852  
♦ K8  
♣ AK4

We're ready for Round Two of Stayman.

We're going to use every skill we've got in this hand. First, we'll reach the right contract by **visualizing** our partner's hand. Then we'll be using our trumps separately to make more tricks than we deserve.

(By the way, for those who are very attentive, you'll remember a hand similar to this in the last set.)



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Intro to Stayman part 2

Stayman Part 2 (SA)	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ Q

The bidding by now is routine. He asks, we answer, he places the contract. Done.

North  
 ♠ 9753  
 ♥ J52  
 ♦ AQ84  
 ♣ K6

West  
 ♠ AQ  
 ♥ 974  
 ♦ 52  
 ♣ QJT943



East  
 ♠ KJT  
 ♥ QT863  
 ♦ T63  
 ♣ 72

South  
 ♠ 8642  
 ♥ AK  
 ♦ KJ97  
 ♣ A85

You are going to love this one! At first, you might despair, but careful planning will rescue you.

I think this hand is nifty because it shows that an eight-card fit is an eight-card fit, regardless of the quality. We have the points for game and the shape of our hand is indicative of a Spade game.

If we get an expected split, we're going to lose three Spade tricks. Period. We also have a Club loser, but that can be trumped in dummy.

When we plan the order of play, we need to consider what will happen if we *don't* pull trumps immediately. The opponents will get another trick when West ruffs a Diamond.

So each time we gain the lead, we lead a Spade until there is only one left. It is often right not to bother drawing the last - master - trump. Here we can play off winning Diamonds, leaving East to take his winning ♠K whenever it gives him the greatest pleasure.


West tries to save the day for the defense by leading a Club for his partner to over-ruff dummy (after all, he can see the *high-low* too), but East eschews the opportunity, preferring to make us pay two-for-one. It makes not the blindest bit of difference - East-West make three trump tricks and nothing more.



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Intro to Stayman part 2

Stayman Part 2 (SA)	Contract: 2N
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ A9	
	♥ JT93	
	♦ KT82	
	♣ T96	
West		East
♠ QT83		♠ 764
♥ A875		♥ K6
♦ 6		♦ J975
♣ J873		♣ KQ54
	South	
	♠ KJ52	
	♥ Q42	
	♦ AQ43	
	♣ A2	

This hand suffers from lack of any "eight card" suits at all. The only hope lies in extreme sneakiness. Should be fun.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	2NT	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ 3

The bidding and use of Stayman has become routine now, hasn't it? There are a few oddball situations, like responder holding 5-4 in the majors, but we'll save them for another day. You've now experienced all the normal and usual occurrences of Stayman. Hopefully you've seen how indeed finding that major fit can save us from the Agony of Defeat most of the time.

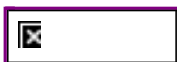
Let's take a look at this hand. Our partner's rebid of 2NT after our declaration of our Spade holding shows him to have invitational values in terms of points (say 8-9), and with four Hearts. We have a flat hand with no extras (just look at those intermediate cards!), so we Pass on the invitation.

We can now see West's lead. Ordinarily the rules say "Lead the fourth highest of your longest and strongest." Here, though, there is no way West is going to lead a major. With canons to the left of him (North is known to have four Hearts) and canons to the right of him (you have shown four Spades) West actually chooses his worst four-card suit to lead. How weird is that? Weird it might be, but it shows a downside of Stayman. Your communications with partner are not secure and those rascally opponents frequently listen in.

When we first look at the hand, we shudder. This Club lead is hitting us where it hurts so we will be wide open there. We think we can cash four Diamonds, two Spades and a Club - so should we bank on a 3-2 Diamond split and a Spade finesse?

Hold your horses... This ♣3 lead suggests that Clubs are breaking 4-4 (West has led fourth-highest, remember, and we can see the ♣2 in our own hand). That means that the opponents can only cash three Clubs and two hearts - not enough to beat us. We can afford to establish two tricks in Hearts.

So we take the second round of Clubs and play patiently on Hearts. The opponents take three Club tricks and two Hearts but that is all - in the end we have something in reserve for the contract.



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Intro to Stayman part 2

Stayman Part 2 (SA)	Contract: 4S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ K432	
	♥ 32	
	♦ Q43	
	♣ KQ54	
West		East
♠ J9		♠ QT8
♥ QJT5		♥ 98764
♦ AT98		♦ K76
♣ 763		♣ 98
	South	
	♠ A765	
	♥ AK	
	♦ J52	
	♣ AJT2	

When we open 1NT, it's like handing the car keys over, and relaxing on the drive. Partner is in charge. (Just pray Pard isn't a teenage driver!)

On this hand, using Stayman, partner steers us into what he expects is the perfect parking spot. However, things don't always work the way you expect them to, do they? Anyway, YOU get ready to play a slightly tricky hand.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: H

When we opened 1NT, our partner knew we had game. The question was "Where?" With shortness in Hearts and a four-card Spade suit, he was bound to test for a major fit. He bid 2♣, asking if we happened to have a major.

When we responded 2♠, he was elated to find our fit. He placed the contract in 4♠. See how simple this is?

Well, simple it may be, but it is distinctly unfortunate on this occasion. 3NT is a cake-walk with the 3-2 Spade break (three Spades, two Hearts and four Clubs). 4♠, by contrast, is a lot harder to make. This deal illustrates the perversity of this game, a sort of anti-Stayman hand. Sometimes you bid immaculately and yet...

After the opening "top of a sequence" ♥Q lead, we begin out **Count** and **Plan**. We see at least one trump loser and three Diamonds. We look for a way to *trump* or *dump* losers in dummy, but it is not to be. So, how can we make 4♠? It is important to realize that Diamonds are positively poisonous. Whoever touches the suit gets toxic overload. The aim of this hand is to force the opponents to lead the suit before we have to.

We are going to use the Diamond suit by playing off as much of the hand as we can and then throw the bums on lead and let them do the work for us.

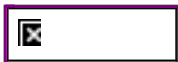
We begin by winning the opening lead in our hand and pulling two rounds of trumps. We are blessed to find we have a 3-2 trump split (4-1 and there would be no hope!), so our plan may work.

Next, we play off our other Heart winner, and start in on the Clubs, which also split 3-2 (not that it matters - Clubs could be 5-0 for all we care). While we're playing off the Clubs, we wait for someone to ruff one of them, but the rascals hold out. Fine. We'll just have to throw them in by playing a trump. As it happens, East takes the trick, and let's look at his options.

If he plays a Heart, we'll get a *ruff and discard*,

allowing us to throw away one of our Diamonds while ruffing in the other hand. If he leads a Diamond, we'll end up with one of our Diamonds a winner.

And that's just what happens. We end up losing two Diamonds and the natural trump trick. The rest are ours.



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Intro to Stayman part 2

Stayman Part 2 (SA)	Contract: 4H
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: N / S

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	2NT
P	3♣	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ J

We have a pretty good hand here and have to decide on an opening bid. We've got the perfect count for 2NT, but we do have a five-card major. Most experts agree that a 5.3.3.2 hand is best opened 2NT, because holding half the points in the deck partner is very likely to respond 1NT, putting the Big Hand on the table. Also, there is a risk that an opening bid of 1♥ might be Passed out, thereby missing a decent game contract.

Take a look at partner's hand. He is delighted to hear us open 2NT. He has the points to carry us to game, but with those ratty black suits, he's hoping for a Heart fit. He bids 3♣ which, as we have already met, is Stayman.

Well, as luck would have it, we sure do have a major! And, Pard shows us a fit and game going values. Note that North has no way of knowing that we have a 5-4 fit rather than a 4-4 fit. The extra trump will just come as something of a welcome bonus to him - when he finds out about it.

The opening lead is just what we needed, giving us two Spade tricks. We have a possible Heart loser and three possible Club losers, depending on who has the ♣A. We have to arrange the hand to keep East off lead to avoid a potentially damaging Club switch *through* the ♣K.

Good things happen to people who do things good, and our careful planning of the hand results in an overtrick. At 2, we lead up to dummy's ♥K, and then take the Heart finesse. Sure, this might lose to ♥Q x with West but so what? As ever, it is important to count your tricks - we'd still have two Spades, four Hearts and four Diamonds. If West led a Club you could throw a Club trick into the mix as well.

Essentially, losing a potential trick to West is harmless as the ♣K is protected from attack. As the cards actually lie, the Heart finesse wins. Now we have *five* Heart tricks, four Diamonds and two Spades.

Finally, we take the Club finesse, playing up to the ♣K) and pray it **doesn't** work. Why? If it

North  
 ♠ 52  
 ♥ KT65  
 ♦ KJ54  
 ♣ 432

West  
 ♠ JT93  
 ♥ 7  
 ♦ T632  
 ♣ A985



East  
 ♠ K8764  
 ♥ Q98  
 ♦ 87  
 ♣ QJT

South  
 ♠ AQ  
 ♥ AJ432  
 ♦ AQ9  
 ♣ K76

We have seen that Stayman is appropriate over a 2NT opener (a deal in the previous series).

However, the first problem here is whether the hand should be opened 2NT...

does, we'll have made six and never hear the end of it from partner for not bidding it.



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Intro to Stayman part 2

Stayman Part 2 (SA)	Contract: 6S
Date: 12/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: E / W

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♠
P	6♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ T

This hand actually comes from my *Fiasco Files*. Let's look at it from the beginning.

North  
 ♠ A643  
 ♥ KJT8  
 ♦ AKQ6  
 ♣ 2

West  
 ♠ K  
 ♥ 764  
 ♦ T973  
 ♣ KT974



East  
 ♠ T987  
 ♥ 953  
 ♦ 85  
 ♣ J865

South  
 ♠ QJ52  
 ♥ AQ2  
 ♦ J42  
 ♣ AQ3

On this deal you get a shock in the bidding. Just make sure you aren't too surprised to play the dummy accurately.

Hint: Beware when it looks too good to be true.

When we open 1NT, Pard asks if we've got a four-card major. Look at his hand - with two majors and a singleton, he's eager to find us with a four-card major. When we answer in Spades, Pard re-evaluates and sees a probable slam. He can ask for Aces, he can cue-bid, or he can just do the math...

Our **Count** and **Plan** shows that we can pretty much throw the cards up in the air and claim, but fortunately saner heads prevail. We consider *What Can Go Wrong?*

We see that what can go wrong is a 4-1 trump split. There is a chance of losing two trumps if we don't handle them right. Look what happens if we run the ♠Q. West covers with the ♠K (like he has a choice!) and we use our ♠A. East's ♠10 grows up and we lose two tricks.

The correct play is to cash the ♠A and lead toward the ♠Q. We only lose one trick. It then costs all our trumps to draw out East's, and we lose one Spade to East. No matter what he returns, the rest of the tricks are ours. We drop the two Club losers on dummy's long Diamonds and Hearts.

Note that 6♠ will also make on this line if East started life with ♠K 10 9 8 as well as his actual holding. If West has four Spades (including the ♠K) then 6♠ is doomed - beaten by any play of the cards.

I did it wrong the first time I played this hand, running the ♠Q, thereby snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. Do as I say, not as I do.