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Intro to Stayman over 1NT & 2NT. Part 2 of 2. ACOL version.
Updated autumn 2015.

VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A863	
	♥ 64	
	♦ AK75	
	♣ J52	
West		East
♠ JT2		♠ Q9
♥ KQJ7		♥ T93
♦ 943		♦ QJT2
♣ QT7		♣ 9863
	South	
	♠ K754	
	♥ A852	
	♦ 86	
	♣ AK4	

You're ready for Round Two of Stayman.

Your bridge skills will be tested both in the bidding and the play of this hand. First, you need to reach the right contract by visualising partner's hand. Then you'll have to generate several extra tricks, because there won't be anything like enough top winners.

(By the way, those who are very attentive may remember a hand similar to this in the previous set.)

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

Lead: ♥ K

Bidding

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

The bidding here requires the 1NT opener to visualise partner's hand. When we show our Heart suit in response to 2♣ (bidding up the line), partner bids 2NT. Since he uses Stayman in the first place, he's simply got to have a major. It isn't Hearts, so guess what it is? He is also making an invitational bid so, he'll probably be in the 11-12 point region.

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.

Play

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 make enough tricks for the contract. 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 draw two rounds of trumps and begin the plan of ruffing losers on table.

West stoically follows suit until the near the end, when he is forced on lead with his master trump and must lead away from his ♣Q. That promotes our ♣J into a winner, giving us an unexpected overtrick. (Another valid option for the eleventh trick would have been to attempt to ruff both of dummy's small Diamonds in hand.)

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



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Stayman Part 2 (ACOL)	Contract: 4S
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

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

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding

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

Play

This hand is instructive because it shows that an eight-card fit is an eight-card fit, regardless of its quality. We have the points for game and the shape of the two hands points to play in a Spade game rather than No-trumps.

If we get an expected split, we're going to lose three Spade tricks. 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 eventually 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 defence 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.

North
♠ 9753
♥ J52
♦ AKJ8
♣ A6

West
♠ AQ
♥ 974
♦ 52
♣ QJT943



East
♠ KJT
♥ QT863
♦ T63
♣ 72

South
♠ 8642
♥ AK
♦ Q974
♣ K85


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



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Stayman Part 2 (ACOL)	Contract: 2N
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ A7	
	♥ QT93	
	♦ KQT8	
	♣ T96	
West		East
♠ QT83		♠ 964
♥ A875		♥ K6
♦ 3		♦ J975
♣ J873		♣ KQ54
	South	
	♠ KJ52	
	♥ J42	
	♦ A642	
	♣ A2	

This hand suffers from the lack of an "eight card" major suit fit.

The best hope during the play lies in trusting the opponents. That should be fun.

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

Lead: ♣ 3

Bidding

The bidding and use of Stayman has become routine now, hasn't it? There are a few odd situations such as those where responder holds 5-4 in the majors, but we'll save those for another day. The hands have illustrated all the common occurrences of Stayman. Finding that major fit can save us from the Agony of Defeat...

Let's take a look at this hand. Our partner's rebid of 2NT shows invitational values in terms of points (say 11-12) with four Hearts. We have an average hand with no extras (just look at the lack of intermediate cards), so we decline the invitation.

Play

Let's analyse West's lead. Ordinarily the rules say "Lead the fourth highest of your longest and strongest suit." Here though, there is no way West is going to lead a major. With cannons to the left of him (North is known to have four Hearts) and cannons to the right of him (South has 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 plus 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 no trouble making the contract.


Note that if the defenders' play in Clubs led you to believe that the suit was splitting 5-3, it would be right to pin your hopes on the Diamonds and Spades, because you would have too many losers if you played on Hearts.



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Stayman Part 2 (ACOL)	Contract: 45
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ K653	
	♥ A2	
	♦ Q43	
	♣ KQ54	
West		East
♠ J9		♠ QT8
♥ QJT5		♥ 98764
♦ AT98		♦ K76
♣ 763		♣ 98
	South	
	♠ A742	
	♥ K3	
	♦ J52	
	♣ AJT2	

When you open 1NT, it's like handing the car keys over and relaxing in the passenger seat. Partner is in charge. (Just hope that he isn't a reckless driver!)

On this hand, using Stayman, partner steers us into what he expects to be the perfect parking spot. However, things don't always turn out as expected, do they?

Anyway, YOU get ready to play a slightly tricky hand.

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

Lead: ♥ Q

Bidding

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 pleased to locate our fit and he placed the contract in 4♠. See how simple this Stayman business 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 (giving us nine tricks via 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. The term for this is "duplication" – meaning that dummy and declarer have the same shape, so nothing can be ruffed. If one hand contained two Diamonds and three Hearts, life would be much easier. Sometimes you bid immaculately and yet...

Play

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 realise 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 utilise the Diamond suit by playing off as much of the hand as we can and then placing the opponents on lead, to 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 with a 3-2 trump split (4-1 and there would be no hope), so our plan will now work.

Next, we play off our other Heart winner, and

start 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 becoming 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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Stayman Part 2 (ACOL)	Contract: 4H
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 52	
	♥ KT65	
	♦ KJ54	
	♣ 432	
West		East
♠ JT93		♠ K8764
♥ 7		♥ Q98
♦ T632		♦ 87
♣ A985		♣ QJT
	South	
	♠ AQ	
	♥ AJ432	
	♦ AQ9	
	♣ K76	

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

However, your first decision here is whether or not your hand should be opened 2NT...

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

Lead: ♠ J

Bidding

We have a good hand here and have to decide on the opening bid. There's the perfect point count for 2NT, but we do have a five-card major. Most experts agree that a 5.3.3.2 shape is best opened 2NT, because there is a risk that an opening bid of 1♥ might be passed out, thereby missing a decent game contract. Also, if partner does have enough to bid over 1♥, he is very likely to respond 1NT. Although you would raise this to 3NT, your strong hand would be exposed for all to see in dummy.

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 seen, is Stayman.

As luck would have it, we do indeed have a four-card major. When North discovers the fit he raises to game. 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.

Play

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 good things, and our careful planning of the hand results in an overtrick. At the second trick, we lead up to dummy's ♥K, and then take the Heart finesse. This is known as an *Avoidance Play*. Of course, this might lose to ♥Q x with West but so what? As ever, it is important to count the tricks - we'd still have two Spades, four Hearts and four Diamonds. If West led a Club next, we could add a Club trick into the mix too.

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 hoping it doesn't work. Why? If it succeeds, we'll have made six and never hear the end of it from partner for not bidding a very lucky slam!



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VB#1 Y2 Stayman Part 2 ACOL	Contract: 6S
Date: 06/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ A643	
	♥ AKJ2	
	♦ AKQ6	
	♣ 2	
West		East
♠ K		♠ T987
♥ 764		♥ 953
♦ T973		♦ 85
♣ KT974		♣ J865
	South	
	♠ QJ52	
	♥ QT8	
	♦ 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: When a contract seems almost impossible, look for a lucky lie of the cards that would help you. Correspondingly, when a contract seems straightforward, look for a lie of the cards that would thwart you, and try to overcome it.

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

Lead: ♦ T

Bidding

When we open 1NT, partner asks if we've got a four-card major. Look at his hand - with two majors and a singleton, he's eager to find a major-suit fit.

When we answer affirmatively in Spades, Partner re-evaluates and envisages a probable slam. He can ask for Aces, he can cue-bid, or he can just do the maths...

Play

At first sight, the **Count** and **Plan** may cause us to think that we can pretty much throw the cards up in the air and claim, but fortunately wiser counsel prevails. We consider - What Can Go Wrong?

The answer is: a 4-1 trump split. There is a chance of losing two trumps if we don't handle them correctly. Look what happens if we run the ♠Q. West covers with the ♠K (as if he has a choice!) and we have to use our ♠A. East's trump holding is now guaranteed to be worth two tricks. This is because we have none of the intermediate Spades, so even when the finesse works, it does us no good.

The correct play is to cash the ♠A and lead toward the ♠Q. We only lose one trick, even though it then costs all our trumps to draw out East's. We concede one Spade to him. No matter what he returns, the rest of the tricks are ours. We can discard 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.

This hand comes from the *Fiasco Files*. Many players do the wrong thing when playing this type of hand, by running the ♠Q, thereby snatching defeat from the jaws of victory. If a "successful" finesse still leads to the failure of the contract, it can't be the right thing to do,

now can it?