

Bridge columns – HAND OF THE CENTURY

We offer our thanks to Zia Mahmood & Guardian.co.UK

Read the original – Zia Mahmood reported this column in Guardian.Co. UK [dated 28-12-2011](#)

This is a candidate for, not only for hand of the year, but hand of the century

We are reproducing it here for all to appreciate Norway's [Geir Helgemo](#)

Today's deal was voted hand of the year by the International Bridge Press Association. It involves a type of play previously unknown to anyone except Geza Ottlik and Hugh Kelsey, whose *Adventures in Card Play* is the most complex bridge book ever written. The star was Norway's [Geir Helgemo](#), who sat South at game all.

	N	
	♠A9743	
	♥K8763	
	♦A6	E
W	♣7	♠Q82
♠None		♥104
♥QJ952	S	♦QJ85432
♦109	♠KJ1065	♣J
♣KQ10982	♥A	
	♦K7	
	♣A6543	

This was the bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1♠
2♠ ¹	2NT ²	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♣ ³	Pass	4NT ⁴
Pass	5♠ ⁵	Pass	7♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Hearts and a minor. (2) Spade support, forcing to game. (3) Short clubs. (4) Keycard Blackwood. (5) Two key cards and the queen of spades, treating his fifth card as the equivalent of the queen.

West led the king of clubs and East played the jack, won by Helgemo with the ace. He cashed the ace of hearts and the king and ace of diamonds, then cashed the king of hearts, then led the nine of spades from dummy ... and ran it! This astonishing first-round finesse was required, as you will see, from the end position that arose.

A spade to the jack came next, and with six cards remaining Helgemo led the king of spades from his hand. West had three master cards in hearts and three in clubs, and had to find a discard on this round of trumps. Since North had three low hearts and South had three low clubs, whatever West did would prove fatal. If he discarded a heart, Helgemo would overtake the king of spades with dummy's ace. Then he would ruff a heart, ruff a club, ruff a heart, ruff a club, and dummy's last heart would be a winner at trick 13. If instead West threw a club, Helgemo would allow the king of spades to hold in his own hand. He would ruff a club, ruff a heart, ruff a club, ruff a heart, and his last club would be a winner at trick 13. An entry-shifting trump squeeze involving a seemingly unnecessary finesse in trumps – but if you follow the play of this incredible deal closely, you will see that the contract would have had no chance if declarer had cashed the ace of spades before leading through East's queen