

WOULD YOU THINK OF THIS?

Today's article will offer a few different hands, all of which are relevant topics to improving your results.

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

Sitting East, you are playing in 3NT on a fourth-highest lead of the ♠3 – 7 – Queen – King. You can now see 2 spade tricks, 1 heart trick, 2 diamond tricks, so only need 4 club tricks (not 5).

However, you also need to realise that the second spade winner (your ninth trick) is not yet established, so some care is required. What is that care? What do you need to notice?

You need to realise that you do not want North on lead. They could switch to hearts, through your Queen. Despite the hand seeming to be fairly bullet-proof, you should lead a club to dummy's Ace, then finesse on the way back, in order to keep North from getting the lead. When the ♣J holds, you now have 10 tricks! In fact, you can duck a round of diamonds too, in case they break 3-3, and you will have garnered 11 tricks.

On the other hand, if you cash the ♣K at trick 2, when you lead the second club South discourages spades by discarding them. When North wins the ♣Q, they can switch to the ♥10 and you only have 8 tricks.

Keep watching for safety plays!

The next hand demonstrates the need to keep a cool head, even when a bad break looks likely to derail your prospects. Think about how you can utilise the information. (NEXT PAGE)

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

West	North	East	South
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

East led the ♣2 (third and fifth highest leads), dummy's Queen winning. Declarer led a spade, finessing the Queen. When it held, he cashed the ♠A, getting the bad news – specifically that he had 3 losers in spades.

North now led a diamond to the Ace then cashed the ♦K. He trumped a diamond in hand, then led a club to dummy's Ace. He next led dummy's last diamond, producing the position below:

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

The ♦5 was led. If West trumped, declarer could discard one heart loser. However, West would also be end-played to lead a heart into dummy's A-Q for declarer's tenth trick.

When West discarded a heart, declarer trumped with his ♠4, then exited with a trump. Once again, West was end-played, having to lead the heart around to dummy's A-Q for the game-going trick.

The logic behind this play lies in the ability to count a hand shape. The opening lead – seemingly fifth-highest – meant that clubs were 5-2. When spades broke 5-1, that gave West 5 spades and 2 clubs. If West held 4 diamonds, declarer could trump the suit out, and if West held only 3 diamonds, then the scenario above applied. Declarer could just concede the three trump tricks to West and rely on end-playing him in hearts. Counting: it is such a necessary tool for your bridge game...

My last offering today involves the application of the KISS principle to defending.

15 pairs played the following hand, and nine of the declarers were successful, despite having four top losers!

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

West	North	East	South
	1NT	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♥ (1)	Pass	4♥
All Pass			

(1) 4 card heart support, minimum 1NT opening bid

The universal opening lead was the ♣J. Most Wests overtook with the ♣Q. Knowing that declarer held two clubs, the key play for the defence was for West to cash their ♠A at trick 2, before playing a second top club. This leaves nothing to chance. When West played the second club, East should trump (!), then cash the ♦A for one off.

Remarkably, none of the East defenders found this play! Many Easts discarded. Playing 'standard' discards (high = like), the ♦10 should steer West to the switch, rather than hoping to promote a trump for partner. Playing reverse discards (low = like), the ♦7 is difficult to read as an encouraging signal. Playing odds = encourage, the ♦7 is straightforward.

One defence almost followed the recommended line, except that the ♣J held trick 1. East switched to a spade to his partner's Ace. When West now led a high club, East ruffed and cashed his ♦A. Good work.

Defence doesn't have to be difficult as long as each partner tries to keep life simple for their counterpart!

The question is: How many of these hands would you have got right at the table?

My hope is: When you are faced with these situations, you will NOW solve them.

Barbara Travis

www.bridgewithbarbara.com