

FINDING A LINE (NEVER GIVE UP)

What would you think about playing in 4♠ on the following hand?

♠ 10 8 6 5 4
♥ K 10 5 4 2
♦ 6 3
♣ 2

♠ A K 7 3
♥ 8 7 6
♦ K 2
♣ K Q 4 3

Things look rather desperate. You have to lose at least one club and one diamond. So that means you need trumps to break, then you have to navigate the heart suit for only one loser. How can you manage this?

Forty years ago, I played the Australian Youth Championships with John Roberts. John had a bit of a rush of blood to his head – or thought my declarer play abilities were sensational – leading to the following auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	<i>John</i>		<i>Barbara</i>
	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♥ (GF!)	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Nowadays, if I held the North had, over partner's 1NT opening bid, I would use 'Garbage (or Junk) Stayman'. I would respond 2♣ and then pass partner's 2♠ response, leading to a comfortable contract.

[If South responds 2♦, you now bid 2♥ - which is a 'pass or correct' bid – asking South to pass with 3 hearts or bid 2♠ when holding only 2 hearts but 3 spades. That way you reach your better major fit.]

Back to the hand. Even as a 20-year-old, I never gave up on a contract. West led the ♦Q to East's Ace, then East cashed the ♣A, prior to exiting with a second diamond.

Step 1 seemed to be the need for a 2-2 trump break. However, even 40 years later, I recall realising that I had to be in the correct hand at the right time. This meant I had to eliminate the clubs, then be able to lead a heart towards dummy, relying on a magical heart position.

Therefore, first, I trumped the small club in dummy, then I drew trumps in two rounds (they behaved). Now I cashed the ♠K-Q, discarding two hearts from dummy. This was the position (that I hoped for):

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

I was in the South hand, so I now led a heart towards dummy's King. West had to duck, otherwise the King (second round) would bring down East's heart honours. My only chance was to rise with the ♥K, hoping for this exact position, then exiting with a small heart. East won the second round, but was end-played into providing a ruff-and-discard, so the second heart loser disappeared.

This hand was memorable because it was my first known end-play, and it occurred against my brother, Peter Gill. *(Funnily enough, my daughter Lauren executed her first end-play when partnering me, played her first legitimate squeeze against me, and also tried her first psyche against me!)*

Here's the full hand, just as I hoped/needed:

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

I guess I justified John's faith in me!

The next hand is of a similar type. It hand was written up by Alan Truscott in The New York Times, January 1982. The article was titled, "***When a Lack of Disciplines Goes With Talent, It Helps***" and related to a hand from the Far East Bridge Championships (now the Asia-Pacific Bridge Federation Championships) which were held in Taipei in December 1981.

"The Australian women have plenty of talent, but a certain lack of discipline may need to be remedied."

"Both aspects are illustrated by the diagrammed deal. South's final bid of 4♠ was wildly optimistic, but such efforts sometimes pay off."

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	<i>Sue Edwards</i>		<i>Barbara Travis</i>
			1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

"A routine lead of the unbid diamond suit would have defeated the contract and, even after the lead of the ♣K, declarer's difficulties might seem insuperable. However, East helped a little by dropping the ♣9, and declarer won the Ace. The ♠10 was led, and West covered with the Queen, which was ruffed in dummy. A diamond was played and, when East ducked, the King won.

"South exited with a diamond, and East overtook her partner's Queen in order to lead a small trump.

"South guessed right by putting up the King and led another club. West refused to cover so the remaining diamond was thrown from dummy. After East ruffed, the position was this:

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

“East cashed the ♠A, making life easy for South. However, no defence could succeed. If East had played a diamond, South would have ruffed in her hand and played a trump. The honours would crash in the defenders’ hands, and the ♣J would be ruffed out to bring home a most implausible contract.”

That’s Alan Truscott’s version of the story, with the reporting of the card play being perfectly correct. However, he missed some pertinent points. My wild jump to 4♠ was based on the belief that partner would pass my 1♠ bid on the hand she held. However, despite having played together for two years, we had a major system disagreement. My partner believed that my 1♠ bid was forcing, whereas I was of the opinion that my bid was non-forcing (and I play it that way to this day!).

My line of play was based on some remarkably clear analysis. Firstly, I needed the ♦A to be onside. Secondly, when East led a trump through, I rose with the King because I believed I couldn’t afford two or three rounds of trumps to be led. If that happened, I would be unable to trump the clubs. So, I figured that I needed East to hold A-x-x and West to hold Q-x in trumps. Then I could trump more clubs and, if East over-trumped, I had determined that both spade honours would fall – exactly as happened!

As I always say, when you are in a revolting contract, find a line that works then play accordingly. Ridiculous as 4♠ was as a contract, I found a line that would lead to success and played for it.

On a final note: You should agree with your partner whether opener’s new suit that is a non-jump is forcing or not. Many play it as forcing, but I don’t. If you play “mini-splinters”, then it has to be forcing, since the jump is a mini-splinter. If you don’t play mini-splinters, then it’s just a simple matter of having an agreement with your partner.

Barbara Travis

www.bridgewithbarbara.com