

Bridge Today Digest - Online

The original bridge magazine by email

Volume 2, Issue 5

Headache Dept.

Playing imps on OKbridge, you, West, pick up:

♠ A K 9 4
♥ 9 6 3
♦ Q 10 2
♣ 7 6 3

East dealer

All vul

West	North	East	South
—	—	2 ♥ [*]	3 ♦
3 ♥	3 ♠	4 ♥ ^{**}	pass
pass	5 ♦	pass	pass
double	(all pass)		

^{*} Trent weak two bid

^{**} Probably a 7-card suit, maximum

You lead the king of spades:

Dummy
 ♠ Q J 10 5 3 2
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 9 6
 ♣ K 10 9 5

West (you)

♠ A K 9 4
 ♥ 9 6 3
 ♦ Q 10 2
 ♣ 7 6 3



Trick one: ♠K, 2, 8, 6

Your partner played the ♠8, count at the five level, so he has either one or two spades. What are your thoughts? What do you play next?

One of the most difficult (and exhausting!) aspects of bridge is mentally constructing hands around the table. Nevertheless, this work must be done to avoid costly errors. On this hand, partner surely has at most one diamond. Therefore he is unlikely to have a singleton spade as well, although it is possible. Suppose he has:

♠ 8
 ♥ A K 10 8 7 4 2
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 8 4 2

This would make the entire hand:

Dummy
 ♠ Q J 10 5 3 2
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 9 6
 ♣ K 10 9 5

West (you)

♠ A K 9 4
 ♥ 9 6 3
 ♦ Q 10 2
 ♣ 7 6 3

East

♠ 8
 ♥ A K 10 8 7 4 2
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 8 4 2

Declarer

♠ 7 6
 ♥ Q J 5
 ♦ K J 8 7 5 4
 ♣ A J

Suppose you're afraid that declarer is the one with the singleton spade, so you switch to a heart. Declarer ruffs, plays a club to her jack (some guess!), cashes the ♣A, ruffs a heart, and plays the king of clubs, pitching her second spade. Now a spade ruff, heart ruff, spade ruff, and declarer is down to K-J-8-7 in diamonds, while you have Q-10-2 and a high spade. There is no way declarer can escape losing two trumps and a spade.

What if declarer has the same hand with the *ace* of hearts instead of the queen-jack? In this case, if you don't cash your spade ace, you don't get it (declarer needs to ruff two hearts, not three, and can use dummy's ace of diamonds to pull a round of trump). However, playing Trent weak-two's, that can't be, because then partner would hold:

♠ 8
 ♥ K Q J 10 7 4 2
 ♦ 3
 ♣ Q 8 4 2

and he opens three hearts, not two. (Trent weak two-bids promise some defense.)

If you ever wonder what great players think about when they go into "the tank" for a long time, this is it. They are trying to imagine all the possible hands. In this case, after some thought about the bidding-and-play scenario, West can figure out that it is not necessary to play a second spade, even if declarer has two of them. In real life, West did play a second spade:

Dummy
 ♠ Q J 10 5 3 2
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 9 6
 ♣ K 10 9 5

West (you)
 ♠ A K 9 4
 ♥ 9 6 3
 ♦ Q 10 2
 ♣ 7 6 3

East
 ♠ 8 7
 ♥ K Q J 10 7 4 2
 ♦ —
 ♣ A 8 4 2

South
 ♠ 6
 ♥ A 8 6
 ♦ K J 8 7 5 4 3
 ♣ Q J

Declarer was able to ruff two hearts, pitch her clubs on the Q-J of spades, give up a diamond a claim.

Opening lead: ♠K Result: Made 5
 Score: -750 Points: -12.08

Bonus: Suppose South had two spades and North-South played in 4♠ instead of 5♦. The defense is very interesting:

North (declarer)

♠ Q J 10 5 3 2

♥ —

♦ A 9 6

♣ K 10 9 5

West (you)

♠ A K 9 4

♥ 9 6 3

♦ Q 10 2

♣ 7 6 3

East

♠ 8

♥ K Q J 10 7 4 2

♦ 3

♣ A 8 4 2

South

♠ 7 6

♥ A 8 6

♦ K J 8 7 5 4

♣ Q J

East leads a high heart against 4♠. Declarer wins, pitching a diamond, and plays a spade to the queen. Now a club to the queen and a second spade. You win and play a heart. Declarer ruffs and cannot play any more trumps until the ace of clubs is knocked out, or he'll lose control. When declarer plays a second club, East must duck it to defeat the contract. He can win the third round of clubs and give his partner a club ruff. Patience!

.....

A Coup by Any Other Name?

Edgar Kaplan reported this hand in *The Bridge World* (April, 1994). South plays in 3NT:

North (dummy)

♠ A 10
♥ Q 5 4
♦ A 9 8 6 3 2
♣ A 5

West

♠ Q 7 3
♥ J 10 2
♦ J 5
♣ J 9 8 7 2

East

♠ K 6 2
♥ K 9 7 3
♦ K 10 4
♣ 10 6 4

South

♠ J 9 8 5 4
♥ A 8 6
♦ Q 7
♣ K Q 3

At one table in the 1993 Bermuda Bowl semifinals, West led a low club against three notrump. Declarer won in dummy to play a diamond toward his queen. East went up with the king and returned the king of spades, a Merrimac Coup (sacrificing his spade honor to take out dummy's entry to the long diamond suit). Declarer, however, was able to win the ace of spades and continue spades to score his game.

At another table in the same event, West, Marty Bergen, found the jack of hearts lead. Declarer ducked in dummy, won the ace, and passed the ♦7 to East's ten. East, Eric Rodwell, returned the king of spades. A Merrimac Coup? Not at all. This was the Deschappelles Coup, where you sacrifice an honor to create an entry in partner's hand. Here declarer, too, was happy to abandon diamonds and play on spades for his contract, but Marty Bergen was able to win the queen of spades and continue hearts to defeat the contract.

* * * * *

See you next time!