



LEARNING FROM THE DEALS

JUST THE RIGHT CARD

BY DANNY KLEINMAN

Thoughtless play of seemingly equivalent or irrelevant cards can prove costly to the declarer, because inferior choices can make it easier for defenders to avoid errors or to resolve guesses. Especially at matchpoints in fields of mixed skill, one needs to declare carefully, playing just the right cards.

A Greedy Declarer

At IMPs, you will do well to secure your game or slam contract even if it means surrendering the rest of the tricks. At matchpoints, where greed for overtricks pays off, you can often do better by risking your contract.

Matchpoints
South dealer
Both sides vulnerable

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

SOUTH
 ♠ 8 5
 ♥ A Q 4
 ♦ A Q J
 ♣ A K Q J 7

SOUTH WEST EAST
 2 ♣ Pass 2 ♦ Pass
 2 NT Pass 3 NT (All Pass)

West leads the five of hearts. *Plan the play for overtricks.*

You have two dummy entries in

hearts, and you can plan to use them both: the first to take a diamond finesse; the second to repeat a winning finesse or as a late entry to a diamond winner after unblocking. Is there anything more to this deal?

Yes, there are two points of interest:

(1) Your first diamond play should be low to the queen. Leading low to the jack of diamonds would make it easier for West to duck the king, thus inducing you to burn your last dummy entry in order to repeat the finesse. (2) You should handle hearts by winning the opening lead with dummy's king and dropping the queen under it, just as you would if you had ace-queen-doubleton. The fewer hearts that West thinks you have, the less the chance that he will shift to spades if he wins a trick with the king of diamonds. Taking the opening lead with dummy's jack of hearts would needlessly give West information.

A point of defense: Declarer's deceptive plan might not succeed if East scrupulously gives count when attitude is unlikely to be useful.

An Obvious Singleton

When you recognize an opening lead as a likely singleton, how can you preclude an opposing ruff?

♦ 26 ♦

Matchpoints; East dealer; East-West vul.

NORTH
 ♠ K 10 2
 ♥ K Q 9
 ♦ A K 9 8 3
 ♣ 6

SOUTH
 ♠ Q 8 7 3
 ♥ 7 2
 ♦ Q J 10 2
 ♣ A 10 4

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 Pass 3 ♣ Double Pass
 4 ♥ Pass Pass

Using third-or-lowest opening leads, West produces the four of diamonds. You can be pretty sure that that is a singleton and that East has at least one ace as an entry. *How do you play?*

Your best chance to stop a ruff is to play an honor from dummy and the jack from your hand. Then, from East's perspective, West's lead might have been from: (a) singleton four, (b) four-deuce, (c) queen-ten-four, or (d) queen-ten-four-deuce. If you show the deuce at trick one, you will narrow the possibilities to (a) and (c); if you follow with the ten or the queen, you will narrow the possibilities to (a) and (b), because West would not underlead honors in sequence.

More generally, when you need to falsecard from three touching honors, the middle one best does the job.

Giving the Leader a Bath

Do you see any way to get more than one club trick on this deal?

[See top of next column.]

West leads the king of clubs, and East discourages with the deuce. You let West hold the king of clubs, attempting a Bath Coup and hoping for a club continuation, *but you should not*

♦ 27 ♦

Matchpoints; North dealer; East-West vul.

NORTH
 ♠ 4 2
 ♥ 7 6 5
 ♦ A Q 9 8 6 4 3
 ♣ 6

SOUTH
 ♠ A 6
 ♥ K 4 2
 ♦ K J 10
 ♣ A J 9 5 4

SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
 3 NT Pass 3 ♦ Pass

falsecard with the nine. Falsecarding here may well be worse than futile, as West, seeing East's deuce, will not only shift but will also suspect your play and might be extra careful to guard clubs later.

So you play low (perhaps the four of clubs rather than the five, to avoid arousing West's suspicion), and the defender helps you even more than you could wish by shifting to the ace of hearts. East follows with the three, and now you may be able to falsecard effectively by following with the four, concealing the deuce. West continues hearts; you win with the king and start running diamonds. You must discard four cards. *What should they be?*

With 10 of the last 11 tricks in the bag, your only reasonable hope for one more is a low club. Discard the nine of clubs, the jack of clubs, the deuce of hearts, and finally the six of spades. East will save a heart to beat dummy's seven, West will (you hope) save his guarded king of spades, and you will cash the ace of spades, the ace of clubs, and the five of clubs to take the rest.

The Bath Coup has failed, to be sure, but you will have given West a bath.

After Stealing, You Deserve . . .

Nowadays, opponents help you in the auction as well as in the play—when they have clubs. A one-club opening is so often based on a weak tripleton (in some partnerships, even on a doubleton) that responder fears to raise with only four (perhaps even five) clubs to an honor.

Matchpoints
West dealer
East-West vulnerable

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

SOUTH		WEST	
1	♥	Pass	Pass
2	♥	Pass	Pass

On this deal, East's third-seat one-club opening is apparently based on at

least four good clubs, more likely five; otherwise, West would have competed in clubs.

West leads the ace of clubs and shifts to a low diamond. *Plan the play.*

Having stolen the contract, your next assignment is to take all the tricks that are there for the stealing. Your first step is to play the queen of diamonds from dummy and to drop the ten under it, hoping to induce East to believe that you are short in diamonds and that West's shift was from the king. Then, when you lead a low spade from dummy, East will be less likely to place you with a singleton spade, and you can steal a trick with your singleton queen. Then, you continue with a club ruff, a spade ruff, a second club ruff, and a second spade ruff. It is at last time to start trumps—with the queen. You discard a diamond from dummy, and East wins with the ace. East exits with the jack of diamonds, which you win in hand with the king. On the king of hearts, East's ten falls. You discard another diamond from dummy, leaving:

SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
1	NT*	Pass	2	♣	Pass	Pass	Pass
2	♣	Pass	3	NT	(AllPass)		

*15-17 HCP

Diamond three, eight, king, four.

Plan your defense.

(Solution on page 37.)

NORTH		SOUTH	
♠	K 8	♠	—
♥	—	♥	A
♦	—	♦	—
♣	—	♣	—

By playing just the right cards, you have induced your opponents to help you. Now you have the rest of the tricks, but don't you deserve more? Yes, you deserve a beer. Draw West's

last trump with your jack and discard dummy's ace of diamonds. Cash the nine of hearts at trick 12 and the seven of diamonds at trick 13. You should unblock dummy's diamonds, because the seven of diamonds is the so-called Beer Card. According to a custom among young players that old fogies are not supposed to know, a declarer who takes the last trick with the seven of diamonds (after having played correctly and made his contract) is entitled to have his partner buy him a beer.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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IMPROVE YOUR PLAY

Problem A

Matchpoints; South dealer; N-S vulnerable

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

SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
2	♣	Pass	2	♦	Pass	Pass	Pass
2	♣	Pass	3	♣	Pass	Pass	Pass
4	♣	Pass	4	♠	Pass	Pass	Pass
6	♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

Diamond ace, deuce, three, spade deuce.

Spade ace, six, four, jack.
Plan the play.

Problem B

Rubber bridge; South dealer; E-W vul.

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

SOUTH		WEST		NORTH		EAST	
2	♣	Pass	2	♦	Pass	Pass	Pass
2	♣	Pass	2	♥	Pass	Pass	Pass
4	NT	Pass	4	NT	Pass	5	♣
6	♠	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass

West leads the club jack.

Plan the play.

(Solutions on page 36.)

IMPROVE YOUR DEFENSE

SOUTH		WEST	
1	NT*	Pass	2
2	♣	Pass	3

*15-17 HCP

Diamond three, eight, king, four.

Plan your defense.

(Solution on page 37.)