

Mike's Advice



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Spot cards and hand evaluation — part 1

If someone gave you this hand, what would your estimate be of its worth?

♠K84 ♥K104 ♦A7 ♣KQJ109

This is a nice 16-count. Now let's make a little change. Here is your

East hands for the May Bidding Box

Bid these hands with a partner. The West hands are on page 36. The North-South players are silent unless otherwise noted. Scores appear on page 29-31.

Problem 1. North deals. None vul. North opens 1♠. South bids 2♠. North rebids 3♠ if possible.

♠A9 ♥Q872 ♦A93 ♣K1065

Problem 2. East deals. N-S vul.

♠AQ92 ♥K6 ♦J102 ♣KQ82

Problem 3. South deals. E-W vul.

♠AQ1086 ♥A107 ♦6 ♣AJ82

Problem 4. West deals. Both vul.

♠J982 ♥QJ5 ♦AK72 ♣AQ

Problem 5. North deals. None vul. North opens 1♥.

♠A97543 ♥— ♦QJ1063 ♣A7

Problem 6. East deals. E-W vul. North bids spades at the lowest level possible.

♠J7 ♥KQJ852 ♦65 ♣A72

Problem 7. South deals. N-S vul.

♠A862 ♥K84 ♦Q10 ♣KQJ10

Problem 8. West deals. Both vul.

♠Q62 ♥64 ♦AQ87 ♣QJ87

new hand:

♠K94 ♥K104 ♦A7 ♣KQJ109

Have you spotted the change? Here is the layout from which this hand came:

Dlr: West ♠ Q 6 2
Vul: None ♥ Q 8 3
♦ K Q 5 4 2
♣ 6 2

♠ K 9 4
♥ K 10 4
♦ A 7
♣ K Q J 10 9

You (South) are in fourth seat. After two passes, East opens 1♠. You overcall 1NT, which your partner raises to game. West leads the ♠10.

How do you like your chances? On a good day, you hope to take 10 tricks, losing only to the three aces. On a bad day, a careless player might go down. Here is how someone did go down when they played in 3NT:

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

The ♠10 came to South's king, East signaling with the 8. South attacked clubs and West took the first round and continued spades. East started looking pleased and the result was a predictable down two. East cashed four spades and took his ♥A for six tricks.

Did South err by bidding 1NT and not 2♣? If North was the declarer, 3NT would have been easy. Did North overbid by raising to 3NT?

In my opinion, the actual bidding was not bad. You can get opinions to the contrary, but no one will say the bidding was wrong.

The "wrong" came in the play.

Given the bidding and the information from the ♠10, East was marked with the ♠A and the ♠J. South had a counter to the defense: At trick one, South should play the ♠Q. East has to win the trick else South will get two spade tricks. The trouble is that if East wins the trick, South still gets two spade tricks. His ♠K94 will be worth two tricks after East wins the ace.

Back to the change I made in your hand: Originally South had the ♠K84, which was changed to the ♠K94. If South had the original hand, 3NT would go down if West had an entry to lead more spades.

The point of this hand and of the hands in this series is that spot cards have a role. Often they can be the difference between making your contract and failing. Be honest. If you had the ♠K94, would you have appreciated its value? □