

WednesdayGame.Com

Education & Entertainment for Bridge Players

2nd March, 2011

DECLARE & DEFEND

On **Board 10** the trump suit was ♠A9853 opposite ♠KT62. Suppose that you lead the three which is followed by the jack (or queen) and won by the king. Do you finesse on the second round of trumps or do you play for a 2-2 break? The Principle of Restricted Choice tells us to finesse, unless we have contra-indications from the bidding or from the earlier play. In fact, finessing is about twice as likely to succeed as playing for the drop. But on this board the Principle lets us down and the finesse fails. Never mind, just keep finessing in this situation, and you'll come out ahead in the long run.

Our next exhibit is **Board 15**.

♠ 93	<i>North</i>	♠ AKT652
♥ T98	<i>Dummy declarer</i>	♥ K
♦ AK92		♦ J63
♣ J965	<i>South</i>	♣ 873

N-S are vulnerable, E-W are not.

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♥	1♠	2♥
Pass	Pass	2♠	Pass
Pass	3♥	Pass	Pass
3♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	Pass	Pass	

You are East and, after a typical heart-spade part-score scuffle, you are declarer in 3♠ doubled. It does not appear that N-S can make game, so down one by you will be a good board, but down two will certainly not be. South leads the heart three which is won by North's ace. North shifts to a low club won by South's king. The club return is won by North's ten, then the ♣A is cashed (on which South pitches a diamond) and the ♣Q comes next.

On that fourth round of clubs, what do you do? Remember, your goal is to get out for down one and you have already lost four tricks.

- Ruffing high cannot be right, that will guarantee that the defense scores two spades, and probably also a diamond for down three.
- Pitching a diamond is better but not good enough. You will lose one more spade and that is down two.
- There is one play which gives you a chance to get out for down only one and it's only a slim chance. You must ruff low (or with the ten, it actually doesn't matter), hoping that South has precisely three spades (so if she overruffs it is with a natural trump trick), and you must further hope that you can somehow avoid a diamond loser.

So, let us assume that you do indeed ruff low and that South overruffs with the seven. You ruff the ♥J return, play the ♠A, then the ♠K. Fortunately for you it transpires that South started with ♠Jxx and North with ♠Qx. So, you are still in with a shot at a triumphant down one, avoiding the dreaded -300.

The last hurdle is to play the diamonds for no losers. By now you have a fairly reliable count of the hand, you can assume from the bidding that hearts are 6-3, and that North started with 2=6=1=4. Do you play for that diamond singleton to be the queen? No, that would mean that South has doubled with ♠Jxx, ♥Jxx, ♦xxxxx, ♣Kx, which is a bit rich, even at matchpoints. So, you run the ♦J (just in case North's singleton is the ten). Down only one! Phew!

		♠ Q4
		♥ AQ7642
		♦ 7
		♣ AQT2
♠ 93	<i>North</i>	♠ AKT652
♥ T98	<i>Dummy declarer</i>	♥ K
♦ AK92		♦ J63
♣ J965	<i>South</i>	♣ 873
		♠ J87
		♥ J53
		♦ QT854
		♣ K4

How does North fare, playing in a heart contract? nine tricks at most tables, as East's singleton ♥K is likely to score a trick. But here is a comical way in which North might score 10 tricks. East cashes the ♠AK, and leads a third round in order to snuff out Dummy's spade winner. West ruffs, forcing

declarer to overruff with the queen. Now declarer has no choice but to lay down the ♥A. 10 tricks!
 Let's kick off **Board 17** by looking at things from declarer's perspective. We have rotated this board to make South the declarer (instead of North).

♠ QJ2 ♥ KJT2 ♦ Q43 ♣ T63	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
				1♣
	Pass	1♥	Pass	2NT
♠ AK74 ♥ Q9 ♦ J92 ♣ AKQ5	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
	Pass			

West leads the diamond six, you play low from Dummy and East wins the ace. Now, this might seem like a foolish question, but how are *you* (as declarer) planning to play the diamond suit? Most declarers would routinely play the two on the first round, then the nine on the second round. But it pays, as declarer, to make out-of-the-ordinary plays from your hand. Here is an example. If you play the nine on the first round of diamonds, and the jack on the second round, interesting things might happen! Concealing that two might scramble the defenders' signals as we are about to see! Now we'll look at things from **West's** perspective.

	♠ QJ2 ♥ KJT2 ♦ Q43 ♣ T63
♠ 963 ♥ 74 ♦ KT865 ♣ 984	<i>Dummy</i>
	<i>West</i> <i>East</i>
	<i>declarer</i>

You probably weren't crazy about your opening lead of the diamond six, but you had to lead something and on a good day the suit might even have run. But not today. East wins the ♦A, declarer playing the nine. East returns the diamond seven, declarer plays the jack, and you pause for thought. The missing diamond is the two and, unless declarer is being devilishly devious, it would appear that East has that two. So, of course, you sensibly duck, letting declarer take her diamond early so that you can stay in touch with East. When he gets in with his hoped-for ace, he'll have a diamond to return and declarer will be down one. Bridge is such an

easy game when you do some counting and watch the spots carefully!
 But, of course, West has been hornswoggled as this is the full hand:

	♠ QJ2 ♥ KJT2 ♦ Q43 ♣ T63	
♠ 963 ♥ 74 ♦ KT865 ♣ 984	<i>Dummy</i>	♠ T85 ♥ A8653 ♦ A7 ♣ J72
	<i>West</i> <i>East</i>	
	<i>declarer</i>	
	♠ AK74 ♥ Q9 ♦ J92 ♣ AKQ5	

East has won the first trick, and West has ducked the second diamond. You can see what happens next, can't you? declarer deduces that West has the ♥A (else why would West need to duck the second diamond) so she concedes a heart next. The bottom line is 11 tricks for declarer, and a zero for E-W, who never score their second diamond trick (let alone a third or fourth). In the post mortem, should East be understanding concerning West's fatal play at trick 2? Actually, no, that would be inappropriate, instead, East should be apologizing profusely for his own bonehead play at trick 2!

Yes, really! declarer has shown 18-19 HCP in the bidding, and that leaves West with just 3-4. So West has no entries and the diamond suit is going nowhere. East must shift at trick (it doesn't really matter to what) to save West from declarer's deception. Later, when East wins the ♥A and returns a diamond, West *will* know that he must win that ♦K! That was nice false-carding by declarer. Be sure to realize that, if declarer plays the diamond two at trick 1, East will know for certain that West started with a doubleton and that he had better grab that king at trick 2 while the grabbing is good!

Those declarers who always play their lowest card from hand, when following to losing tricks, make life altogether too easy for the defense, it pays to mix things up a bit and to be unpredictable! Here, declarer didn't have to figure out exactly what kind of problem that false-carding might cause, merely that playing unpredictable (or downright dishonest) cards *might* confuse the other guys!

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BIDDING 6-PACK

Problems

Board 4 **Both Vul**
 ♠ K3 *West North East South*
 ♥ ??
 ♦ J97642
 ♣ AJT92

Board 5 **N-S Vul**
 ♠ 85 *North East South West*
 ♥ KQ ??
 ♦ Q962
 ♣ A6432

Board 11 **None Vul**
 ♠ 4 *South West North East*
 ♥ A872 **1♦ Pass 1♠ Pass**
 ♦ AKJT2 ??
 ♣ T73

Board 12 **N-S Vul**
 ♠ 6 *North East South West*
 ♥ KQ97 **Pass**
 ♦ K7432 ??
 ♣ K82

Board 13 **Both Vul**
 ♠ *North East South West*
 ♥ KQT8765 **1♥ Pass 2♦ Pass**
 ♦ T43 **2♥ Pass 3♥ Pass**
 ♣ AK6 ??

Board 24 **None Vul**
 ♠ T86 *North East South West*
 ♥ AT74 **Pass**
 ♦ AKT932 **1♦ Pass 1♠ Pass**
 ♣ ??

Solutions

Board 4 **Both Vul**
 ♠ K3 *West North East South*
 ♥ ??
 ♦ J97642
 ♣ AJT92

Do you take action in first seat? The options are:

- **Open 2♦?** We are not opposed to opening a Weak two with a two-suiter once in a while, but it hardly seems right when the long suit is so awful, and when we have an outside ace *and* an outside king *and* a void.
- **Pass?** We suppose that this will be a common choice, but a feeble one in our opinion, this hand has so much potential!
- **Open 1♦?** Yes, that's the ticket! Only 9 HCP but great playing strength (at least, if a minor suit fit is found). It also has some defense if partner is in a doubling mood, added to which it even passes the Rule of 20! Who could ask for more?

So, it's official, the Wednesday Game occasionally opens 9-point hands! It turns out that East has a big fit in diamonds and, after West's 1♦ opening, E-W will cruise to slam, despite having only 22 combined HCPs. East's hand is ♠AT642, ♥2, ♦AKQT53, ♣5 so, in fact, even 7♦ is cold! But that's hard to reach! And it would also be hard to reach even a small slam if West passes originally.

Board 5 **N-S Vul**
 ♠ 85 *North East South West*
 ♥ KQ ??
 ♦ Q962
 ♣ A6432

On Board 4 West had a 9-point hand which happened to pass the Rule of 20 and which also happened to look like an opening bid (at least to us). Here we have an 11-point hand which passes the Rule of 20 but, perversely, this one does *not* look like an opening bid! Here is why:

- That doubleton ♥KQ is not pulling it's full weight
- There are no hidden extras, such as some useful tens or shortness somewhere
- If we open 1♣, what do we rebid when partner bids 1♥?
- We could open 1♦, planning to rebid 2♣, but that is not particularly appealing on such a featureless and yucky hand.

Board 11**None Vul**

♠ 4	South	West	North	East
♥ A872	1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
♦ AKJT2	??			
♣ T73				

What is your choice of rebid with the South hand?

- **2♥?** Definitely not, that would be a strength-showing reverse and this hand is not close to qualifying.
- **1NT?** Not our favorite, we try to avoid that rebid with a singleton in partner's suit (though it's not always possible), in case partner gets the urge to rebid his 5-card suits. Added to that, we have nothing in clubs, and No Trump might be better played from North's side (for example, a spade lead through North might be awkward).
- **2♦?** Yes, that's our choice. More often than not this bid is made with a 6-card suit, but a 5-card suit this good is more than adequate.

By a strange coincidence, on **Board 12** North held a remarkably similar hand, at least in terms of shape and strength: ♠6, ♥KQ97, ♦K7432, ♣K82. But the texture is quite different and with this hand the general plan would be to open 1♦ and then, if partner bids 1♠, we *would* rebid 1NT. And we certainly wouldn't argue with those Norths who, noticing the alarming absence of intermediates and the feeble suit and the minimum strength, would choose to pass originally.

Board 13**Both Vul**

♠	North	East	South	West
♥ KQT8765	1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
♦ T43	2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
♣ AK6	??			

In the 2/1 style, South's 3♥ was forcing and more encouraging than a direct leap to 4♥. What next?

- **Bid 6♥ directly:** It'll probably make but partner is unlimited and 7♥ may be on.
- **Bid 4NT (Roman Key Card):** Not a good idea with that void.
- **Bid 4♠:** Do you play this as a Splinter? Or as Exclusion Key Card? It's worth discussing with partner, but we don't think either would be right for this hand, in both cases on account of those three small diamonds, which are in definite danger of derailing the grand slam.
- **Cue-Bid:** That would be our choice, but it raises a bunch of new questions.

What is your cue-bidding style?

- Do you tend to bid your cheapest first- or second-round control? [our suggestion is "Yes" but not without a high trump]
- Do you bid your cheapest first-round control? [see previous answer]
- Do you cue-bid shortness and high cards with equal abandon? [we suggest "No", it can be quite misleading to cue-bid shortness, if partner has, say, KQx, then there is a huge difference in the value of that holding opposite an ace and opposite a void]

This is a complicated subject! We'll leave it there.

Board 24**None Vul**

♠ T86	North	East	South	West
♥ AT74				Pass
♦ AKT932	1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
♣	??			

It's often a good idea for opener to raise partner with three-card support and a ruffing value. North's hand certainly passes those two tests, but it would be somewhat bizarre to raise with three small, when there is such a good six-card suit available to be rebid. So the auction proceeds:

	North	East	South	West
				Pass
	1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
	2♦	Pass	3♣	Pass
	3♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
	??			

After North finally admits to spade support and South launches into Roman Key Card, North is faced with a similar situation to the one she faced back on Board 4. Should she bid 5♥ (two Key Cards without the trump queen) or should she bid 5NT (two Key Cards and a void). As on Board 4, it won't be obvious to South where that void is, so 5♥ is the way to go. Surely it's more helpful to deny the trump queen than it is to show a void in an unknown suit.

Afterthought

After 1♦ 1♠, 2♦ 3♣, would it have been better to show the 4-card heart suit first, planning to support the spades later? No, North probably does not have four hearts (she declined to bid 2♥ earlier), better to support spades immediately, we think, it will make for a less confusing auction.