

WednesdayGame.Com

Education & Entertainment for Bridge Players

6th April, 2011

DECLARE & DEFEND

Every month your Wednesday Game staff search high and low for worthy play-of-the-hand problems. This particular offering is from **Board 4**. Not that you would recognize it as such ... firstly, we made South and East partners ... secondly, we had to tweak the N-W defending hands to make our point. But the end result is most instructive!

♠ 9 ♥ T743 ♦ AKT7632 ♣ 6 ♠ K2 ♥ AKQ5 ♦ J ♣ KQJ842	<table border="0"> <tr> <td><i>West</i></td> <td><i>North</i></td> <td><i>East</i></td> <td><i>South</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>3♦</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>										
Pass	3♦	Pass	3NT										
Pass	Pass	Pass											

We don't fault North for opening 3♦ (how could you *not* bid such a lovely suit?), but it did result in a perilous 3NT contract when 4♥ appears to be a piece of cake. The opening lead is the ♠Q to East's Ace, then a Spade to your King. At this point the E-W Spades are ready to run and whatever tricks that Declarer is going to take he must take immediately.

What's the percentage play in Diamonds? Looked at in isolation, you would play for the Queen to be on-side and for the suit to be 3-2. Accordingly, you would run the ♦J and then, if that won the trick, you would cross to the board and run the suit. But can you reach the board? Of course you can, you'll cash the top Hearts and get to Dummy on the 4th round of the suit.

Well, maybe! Suppose that the Hearts are 4-1. If that is the case then you will have no entry to the board and would be better off praying that the ♦Q is doubleton. So, before playing on Diamonds, you will test the Hearts by playing the Ace and then the King. If the Hearts are 3-2 then you can take the percentage play in Diamonds ... if not then you must hope that the ♦Q is doubleton. This is the layout you are catering for:

♠ QJT83 ♥ 9 ♦ Q8 ♣ T97	<table border="0"> <tr> <td colspan="2"><i>Dummy</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>West</i></td> <td><i>East</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><i>Declarer</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>Dummy</i>		<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>Declarer</i>		♠ A7654 ♥ J862 ♦ 954 ♣ A53
<i>Dummy</i>								
<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>							
<i>Declarer</i>								
	♠ K2 ♥ AKQ5 ♦ J ♣ KQJ842							

Yes, testing the Hearts first gets a lucky 11 tricks, while the superior 4♥ contract scores only 10!

On **Board 10** the contract is 3NT after South has opened a Weak Two in Spades.

♠ A65 ♥ AT6 ♦ AK ♣ QJ843	<table border="0"> <tr> <td colspan="2"><i>North</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td><i>Declarer</i></td> <td><i>Dummy</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="2"><i>South</i></td> </tr> </table>	<i>North</i>		<i>Declarer</i>	<i>Dummy</i>	<i>South</i>		♠ 983 ♥ KJ32 ♦ T532 ♣ A2
<i>North</i>								
<i>Declarer</i>	<i>Dummy</i>							
<i>South</i>								
	♠ 7 ♥ Q754 ♦ 876 ♣ KT975 ♠ KQJT42 ♥ 98 ♦ QJ94 ♣ 6							

Declarer wins the third round of Spades and North must find two pitches ... not Hearts ... not two Clubs ... so North pitches two Diamonds. Now a Club to the Ace (in case South has singleton King), and a Club to the Queen and North's King. North gets out safely with ♣T, but Declarer cashes the ♦A and ♦K, squeezing North in Clubs and Hearts!

With one Diamond left to cash, North will have ♥Q754 and ♣97. On that second Diamond, if she pitches a Heart then Declarer scores a long Heart ... and if she pitches a Club then Declarer can lose a Club, setting up a long Club.

South helped Declarer by persisting with Spades. But even if South shifts to a low Diamond at Trick 2, Declarer can still prevail. He wins the Diamond, ducks a Spade, wins the Diamond return, runs ♣Q, cashes ♣A, exits a Diamond. South cashes a second Diamond and when she exits with a Spade to the Ace, North is done for ... it's a Throw-In Squeeze!

On **Board 17** what useful information can you glean from the auction?

♠ T743 ♥ KT2 ♦ 75 ♣ J764	Hands Rotated for Convenience			
	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
				1♦
	2♣	Pass	Pass	2♥
♠ A	2♠	Pass	Pass	3♦
♥ AQ87	Pass	3♥?	Pass	Pass
♦ AK8432	Pass			
♣ QT				

The most obvious piece of information is that Partner is insanely optimistic, going for all the matchpoints in the 4-3 Heart fit instead of settling for the easy 6-2 Diamond part-score. But ruing Partner's bidding won't help you make 9 tricks in 3♥, it's more helpful to focus on West's most likely distribution.

West would not bid like that with modest values and a balanced hand, so it's fair to assume that he has at least 5 Clubs. That being the case, we'd say that his most likely distributions are 4=3=1=5 and 4=2=2=5. Yes, there are other possibilities (such as 4=1=2=6) but they are too awful to contemplate.

If West's distribution is 4=2=2=5 then the contract can be made easily enough. After winning the ♠A, you will cash the ♦AK, ruff a Diamond, draw three rounds of trumps, ending in hand, and then rattle off the Diamonds. West can take his good trump when he likes, but you will have no fewer than 10 tricks.

Next, consider the 4=3=1=5 case, where the good news is that the trumps are breaking, but the bad news is that Diamonds are more difficult to set up. It won't work to play as before by cashing the ♦AK, as West will ruff and return a trump. Now you cannot get the Diamonds going and a cross-ruff doesn't work either. The route to nine tricks is a strange one. Declarer must cash *one* high Diamond and concede a Diamond. Yes, really! Losing that second Diamond allows the Diamonds to be established with just one ruff on the board.

Which distribution do you cater for? We would go for 4=3=1=5 case, because the line of play to make the contract is so exotic. Anyone can cash the ♦AK and ruff a Diamond, it takes a classy player to concede the second Diamond trick.

P.S. The exotic play is also the winning line of play.

If you would like to test your timing, try looking only at the N-S hands on **Board 19** (rotated to make South the Declarer).

	♠ 3 ♥ KJ5 ♦ A9432 ♣ QJ96	
♠ QT9854 ♥ 9842 ♦ T7 ♣ 4	<i>Dummy</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Declarer</i>	♠ K76 ♥ Q76 ♦ QJ65 ♣ 732
	♠ AJ2 ♥ AT3 ♦ K8 ♣ AKT85	

Using an impressive array of bidding weaponry, your side reaches the fine contract of 7♣. Now we get the chance to see if your Declarer play is as good as your bidding. East leads a Spade. Where are your 13 tricks coming from?

There are 10 top tricks and two Spade ruffs on the board will get you up to 12. The thought process for getting to 13 tricks is:

- You'd like to avoid the Heart guess, and the way to do that is to set up the Diamonds ...
- ... but if Diamonds are 5-1 you don't want to run into a defensive ruff ...
- ... so you will test the trumps early, in case they are 2-2.

Correct timing requires that you delay the Spade ruffs and go this route:

- Win the ♠A**
- Cash ♣A**
- Cross to the ♣Q (West showing out)**

Well, trumps were not 2-2 so, hoping that Diamonds are not 5-1, you continue ...

- Cash ♦K**
- Cross to the ♦A**
- Ruff a Diamond**
- Ruff a Spade**
- Ruff a Diamond**
- Ruff a Spade**
- Cross to the ♥A**
- Draw the last trump**
- Cross to the ♥K**
- Cash the long Diamond**
- Wipe sweat off brow**

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BIDDING 6-PACK

Problems

Board 3	E-W Vul
♠ 5	<i>North East South West</i>
♥ AKQ	1NT Pass
♦ 9873	??
♣ J8753	

Board 8	None Vul
♠ KQJT3	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ 2	??
♦ QT84	
♣ 532	

Board 8	None Vul
♠	<i>North East South West</i>
♥ AQJ965	2♠
♦ K3	??
♣ KQJ87	

Board 22	E-W Vul
♠ 93	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ QT2	Pass Pass
♦ KQ	1NT Pass 2♥ Dbl
♣ AKJ982	??

Board 31	N-S Vul
♠ KQ43	<i>North East South West</i>
♥ 84	1♣ 1♥
♦ QT98	Dbl 2♥ Pass Pass
♣ J73	??

Board 32	E-W Vul
♠ T754	<i>South West North East</i>
♥ KQ	Pass Pass Pass
♦ AKJ65	??
♣ KQ	

Solutions

Board 3	E-W Vul
♠ 5	<i>North East South West</i>
♥ AKQ	1NT Pass
♦ 9873	??
♣ J8753	

North has game-going values and, in the absence of special methods, will bid 3NT, hoping that the Spades are not a fatal weakness. However, there's a special gadget for this kind of hand.

That 1345 Thing

After Partner opens 1NT:

- 3♥: shows Heart shortness, three Spades, and 4-5 (either way) in the minors
- 3♠: shows Spade shortness, three Hearts, and 4-5 (either way) in the minors

The idea here is to (a) avoid hopeless 3NT contracts, (b) find a 4-3 major fit if that looks better than 3NT (note that the ruffs come in the short hand, always a good thing when playing those 4-3 fits), (c) to play in 5♣ or 5♦ if all else fails.

Using this treatment, North might well respond 3♣, and South will try 3NT (which makes). So this time the gadget did not guide us to a magic 4-3 major fit or a five-of-a-minor contract, maybe next time.

Does anybody know of a more elegant name for this treatment, something better than "That 1345 Thing"? But call it what you like, it's a useful treatment for a troublesome type of hand.

Board 8	None Vul
♠ KQJT3	<i>West North East South</i>
♥ 2	??
♦ QT84	
♣ 532	

Would you open a Weak Two with that West hand, notwithstanding the 5-card suit? We think that the bid has much to recommend it:

- E-W are non-vulnerable (smaller down-side)
- Spades have extra preemptive power
- West has a good suit (lead-directional value)
- Good offense, not much defense (those are the preempts that work best!).

How many more reasons (some would call them excuses) do we need to open 2♠?

Board 8	None Vul		
♠	<i>North East</i>	<i>South West</i>	
♥ AQJ965			2♠
♦ K3	??		
♣ KQJ87			

What should North do now? That's a three-loser hand and is just a couple of Key Cards away from making slam. North's options are:

- **4♥:** We'd characterize this bid as "Neanderthal but practical". But whenever we make this kind of bid, Partner always shows up with just the right cards for slam.
- **Db1:** The plan would be to bid Hearts next, but things could get complicated (is this a Lebensohl situation for you?). Also, you won't be thrilled if Partner makes a Penalty Pass.
- **4♣:** Many play this as Leaping Michaels, typically showing 5-5 in Clubs and Hearts and a good hand (but not necessarily *this* good). The downside here is that it is an underbid and that the Hearts are good enough to be trumps unilaterally.
- **3♠:** In this case, North will bid 4♥ next, and perhaps that is the best plan of all.

Board 22	E-W Vul			
♠ 93	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
♥ QT2			Pass	Pass
♦ KQ	1NT	Pass	2♥	Db1
♣ AKJ982	??			

West tries 1NT (absolutely nothing wrong with opening 1♣, either), East transfers and South makes a lead-directing Double. At this point, what are West's options?

- **Pass:** This is generally played as denying three-card support.
- **2♠:** Shows 3-card support.
- **Super-Accept:** No reason not to use your super-accept machinery in this situation.
- **Redouble:** This is generally played as suggesting that the Doubler may have made a mistake and that 2♥ redoubled might result is a strange plus score for E-W. But that is not very useful, and almost never comes up in real life. For this reason, some pairs play that the Redouble shows 3-card Spade support and a *good* hand. That's a treatment which *does* come up in real life (but not on this deal).

Board 31	N-S Vul			
♠ KQ43	<i>North East</i>	<i>South West</i>		
♥ 84			1♣	1♥
♦ QT98	Db1	2♥	Pass	Pass
♣ J73	??			

As North, you'd hate to sell out to 2♥, wouldn't you? Here's what you know about Partner's hand:

- She cannot have four Spades as she did not compete with 2♠ (which she really should do when holding four Spades, however reprehensible her opening bid might be).
- No more than three Hearts (looks like the opponents have at least eight of that suit).

From the above you can deduce that your side either has a 7-card fit in Spades or at least an 8-card fit in one of the minors. Therefore, notwithstanding the vulnerability (which makes us more than a little nervous), we suggest that North balances with a Double. It's the so-called Action Double, primarily for takeout. If South has three Spades she'll probably bid 2♠ ... otherwise she will pick a minor suit. On the actual deal, with 2=3=3=5 distribution, she bids 3♣ and will play it there.

The bottom line is:

- If North passes out 2♥ then it's -110.
- If North makes an Action Double then South bids 3♣. That's a perilous contract which limps home for 9 tricks and +110.

Board 32	E-W Vul			
♠ T754	<i>South West</i>	<i>North East</i>		
♥ KQ			Pass	Pass
♦ AKJ65	??			
♣ KQ				

We suppose that most Souths will open this 1♦, their plan being to rebid 2NT if Partner bids 1♥. That is a sequence which shows 18-19 HCP. This hand is 18, but there are 18's and then there are 18's. Despite the 5-card suit, this particular 18 is remarkably poor, let us count the ways:

- That doubleton ♥KQ is a serious minus ...
- ... as is the equally ugly doubleton ♣KQ
- Only one Ace
- No working fillers (we don't count that stranded ♠T)

Bottom line: if you treat this as an 18-count you get too high ... if you downgrade to a 1NT opening you go plus!