

Second-Hand Problems

by Eric Crowhurst

*Eric Crowhurst, an accountant from Reading, England, has long been considered a first-rank bridge theoretician. He is the author of several bridge books perhaps the best known of which being **Acol in Competition**. He was the inventor of the Crowhurst convention, a checkback over a wide-range 1NT rebid, which is widely used by British tournament players. He contributed the suit combinations section of the **Bridge Encyclopedia**.*

You are the declarer in a notrump contract, and you have a 4-4 club fit containing A-K-Q-J-10-9 in the two hands. How would you plan the play of the club suit? If you believe that it cannot possibly matter, read on.

If the adverse clubs are 3-2, one defender will have to find one discard on the clubs, and the other defender (Defender B) two. The important point is that if the fourth round of clubs is led from the hand on his right, defender B's two discards will have to be made before defender A has even made one. This can be of considerable advantage to the declarer.

<p>Board 11 South Deals None Vul</p>		<p>♠ K 5 4 ♥ 7 5 2 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ K Q 6 2</p>	<p>♠ Q J 9 2 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ J 7 5 2 ♣ 8 4</p>			
<p>♠ 7 6 3 ♥ K Q J 9 ♦ Q 10 3 ♣ 7 5 3</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	<p>♠ A 10 8 ♥ 10 8 4 ♦ K 9 6 ♣ A J 10 9</p>	
N						
W E						
S						
West	North	East	South			
Pass	3 NT	All pass	1 NT			

The defenders cash their four heart tricks, on the last of which declarer discards a spade from dummy. East throws ♠9, after some thought, and South discards ♦6.

West switches to ♠6, the standard MUD lead from three small cards, and South captures East's ♠J with the ace. It looks as if East might be under pressure when the clubs are cashed, and this diagnosis is confirmed when South's lead of ♣J produces ♣3 from West and ♣8 from East. If East began with two clubs at the most, he might be in difficulty if the fourth round of clubs is led from dummy – so that he has to find two discards before receiving any help from West.

South cashes ♣A and crosses to dummy with ♣Q, on which East discards a diamond. On the last club, East has a serious problem. Should he throw a spade, retaining a diamond guard if West started with ♠10-8-7-6 and ♦Q-x? Or should he discard a second diamond, which is vital in the actual lay-out? It is not easy for him – but only because he has to make the crucial discard before West can clarify the spade position.

South selected his victim on the above hand because East had some difficulty in finding a discard on the fourth heart and because he seemed to have started with a doubleton club.

BOLS TIP: *Plan which opponent plays second to the trick.*