

## Give Declarer Enough Rope

by Tim Seres

*Generally considered the best player Australia has ever produced, Tim Seres describes himself as a horse-racing investor. Whether this is a euphemism for betting at the races, or whether he owns racehorses, this is an extremely precarious way to earn a living and success needs similar qualities as at the bridge table — a sound knowledge of odds and percentages coupled with nerves of steel! Now in his seventies, Tim's high spots were in 1971 and 1979 when Australia finished third in the Bermuda Bowl. A contributor to several magazines, he has been awarded the Order of Australia for services to bridge.*

In the long haul you win at bridge by avoiding error rather than by being brilliant. The expert may display an occasional glimpse of genius or elegance, but he owes his pre-eminence to the fact that he makes fewer mistakes than his fellow players.

Because bridge is a game of errors, you should try to develop the knack of giving an opponent the chance to go wrong. One way of doing this is by providing the declarer with a choice of plays in a situation where he would otherwise be bound to make a winning play.

	A	Q	10	3	
		N			
J	9	7	5		4
		W		E	
		S			
	K	8	6	2	

This is the trump suit and declarer starts by laying down dummy's ace. If West follows small, declarer will play low to the king on the next round, exposing the finesse against the jack. (Declarer has no way to succeed if East has J-9-x-x.) West, however, should drop the nine on the first round. Now declarer may continue with dummy's queen, playing East for J-x-x-x.

The next example is also well known:

		Q	10	9			
		N					
7	5	3			K	J	6
		W		E			
		S					
		A	8	4	2		

South plays low to the ten. If East wins with the jack, declarer has no choice but to enter dummy and finesse against the king on the next round. East therefore should win the first trick with the king. This affords declarer a losing option, as he may finesse the nine on the next round, playing West for J-x-x-x.

Opportunities for such plays come along much more frequently than many players realize. The following hand occurred in a top-class Pairs event:

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**Board 7**  
South Deals  
Both Vul

♠ 8 7 3 ♥ 8 6 4 3 ♦ 10 9 ♣ J 9 7 5	♠ A K Q 4 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ 8 4 2	<div style="text-align: center; border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <span>N</span> <span>W</span> <span>S</span> <span>E</span> </div> ♠ J 10 5 ♥ A J 9 ♦ Q J 8 3 2 ♣ Q 10	♠ 9 6 2 ♥ K 5 2 ♦ A K 4 ♣ A K 6 3
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	1 ♣
Pass	3 NT	All pass	2 NT

At this table South won the diamond lead and tested spades. On the ace and king of this suit East dropped the jack and ten! Not surprisingly, declarer assumed that the spades were 4-2 and he continued by playing low to the nine, hoping to re-enter dummy with a heart. But East of course ducked the king of hearts when it was led. The contract could now have been made only on double-dummy lines and in actual play South finished one down.

The hapless declarer had fallen victim to a defender who followed the very profitable adage, 'Give declarer enough rope ...'

It stands to reason that if you consistently give your opponent a chance to go wrong, he will sometimes take it!

*BOLS TIP: When you can see that declarer is bound to succeed by normal play, look for a chance to give him a losing option.*