

A Master at Work

By Mark Horton

By the 1950s, the Culbertson era was over and modern bridge can fairly be said to have arrived. Goren's point-count methods had overtaken Culbertson's honor trick system in popularity in the USA. Meanwhile a group of young British experts had developed a new natural system, Acol, named after the Acol Road Bridge Club where they all played. The 1955 World Championship was held in New York and to some extent was regarded as a test of the two ideologies. The final indeed saw Great Britain taking on the defending champions from the USA in a match which Great Britain won by 5420 points — they used aggregate scoring in those days.

This deal set up a spectacular comparison of declarer play:

Board 10
East Deals
Both Vul

	♠ A J 9 3 ♥ K J 8 7 4 3 ♦ A 3 ♣ 4					
♠ 10 8 7 6 ♥ — ♦ K Q J 10 9 7 5 ♣ 8 2	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K ♥ Q 9 6 5 2 ♦ 8 6 4 2 ♣ Q 5 3	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ Q 5 4 2 ♥ A 10 ♦ — ♣ A K J 10 9 7 6					
West <i>Pavrides</i>	North <i>Ellenby</i>	East <i>Meredith</i>	South <i>Rosen</i>			
3 ♦ All pass	3 ♥	Pass 4 ♦	1 ♣ 6 ♣			

The American declarer's effort showed nothing special. West led the nine of diamonds; declarer won with dummy's ace and played a club to the jack. When that worked he was able to draw trumps and give up a spade. Given West's preemptive effort, that was reasonable, but if the finesse had lost declarer would almost certainly have gone down.

	♠ A J ♥ J 8 4 ♦ A ♣ —					
♠ 10 8 7 6 ♥ — ♦ Q J ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K ♥ Q 6 ♦ 8 6 2 ♣ —	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ Q 5 4 2 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 10 9					
West <i>Mathe</i>	North <i>Schapiro</i>	East <i>Moran</i>	South <i>Reese</i>			
3 ♦ All pass	3 ♥	Pass 5 ♦	1 ♣ 6 ♣			

It was in the replay that Terence Reese showed why he was regarded by many as the best player in the world by taking a much superior line. He ruffed the opening lead of the nine of diamonds and cashed the two top trumps. Then he cashed the ace and king of hearts. East covered the seven of hearts and declarer ruffed and exited with a trump. This was the position:

	♠ A J ♥ J 8 4 ♦ A ♣ —					
♠ 10 8 7 6 ♥ — ♦ Q J ♣ —	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K ♥ Q 6 ♦ 8 6 2 ♣ —	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ Q 5 4 2 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 10 9					

A heart or a diamond would allow declarer to establish two tricks in hearts. East took his best chance and tried the king of spades, only to have Reese table his hand.