

#11 WHERE'S THERE'S EIGHT, THERE MUST BE NINE

Dlr: South

Vul: Both

IMPs

North

S. 54

H. AKJ10

D. 10987

C. AQ5

South (you)

S. A8

H. 632

D. AKJ5

C. K732

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: SK

East signals with the 9 and you decide to win the opening lead. How do you continue?

Solution:

You have eight top tricks with a chance for a ninth in three suits. In addition, you dare not give up the lead. First start with clubs. If that suit divides 3-3, your worries are over. Life is never that easy. If clubs are 4-2 you have to bring home one of the red suits. But which one?

When you have two suits missing a queen and can't afford to give up the lead, play the AK of the longer suit (diamonds) and if the queen doesn't drop take a finesse in the shorter suit (hearts). After the clubs cash the HA, in case the queen is singleton, and if it isn't (I'm not that nice a guy), play the DAK and if the queen doesn't drop, take the heart finesse. Your play is rewarded, the DQ falls doubleton so you need not risk the heart finesse.

West hand: S. KQ1076 H. 74 D. Q4 C. J964

East hand: S. J932 H. Q985 D. 632 C. 108

#12 SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SLAM

Dlr: South
Vul: None
IMPs

North
S. J9542
H. A32
D. A32
C. K4

South
S. AK1086
H. KJ10
D. KJ9
C. AJ

South	West	North	East
2NT (1)	Pass	3H(2)	Pass
4S(3)	Pass	6S	All Pass

- (1) This hand screams for a 2NT opening bid.
- (2) Transfer.
- (3) Four spades (usually).

Opening lead: C10

East plays the C7 at trick one which you win with the ace. At trick two you play the SA, both following. How do you continue?

Solution:

After drawing the last trump, the idea is to hold your red suit losers to one and you have a 100% play. Cash a second club, stripping that suit, and exit with the AK and J of diamonds. Whoever wins must lead a heart or give you a ruff and a sluff. Don't even think of taking two finesses when you can ensure the contract without taking either.

West hand: S. 7 H. Q98 D. Q1087 C. 109852
East hand: S. Q3 H. 7654 D. 654 C. Q763

THE BOTTOM LINE

Equal length side suits lend themselves to be throw-in suits to force a favorable lead.

When faced with a choice of using one of two equally divided suits both missing a queen as your throw-in suit, use the weaker suit to force a lead in the stronger suit.

#13 THE TEST

The American Bridge Teacher's Association issues a quarterly magazine designed to aid teachers and present them with the latest teaching techniques. Lesson hands are included that teachers have submitted so that other teachers can benefit from them as well. The following hand is of intermediate plus difficulty and will be presented as a problem to see if you are "on the way up"!

Dlr: South

Vul: Both

North (dummy)

S. AQ53

H. K87

D. K832

C. Q7

South (you)

S. 104

H. AQJ1054

D. A65

C. 96

South	West	North	East
1H	Pass	1S	Pass
2H	Pass	4H	All Pass

Opening lead: CA. West cashes the king of clubs at trick two and exits a trump. Trumps are 2-2; plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. J762 H. 32 D. J97 C. AK84

The East hand: S. K98 H. 96 D. Q104 C. J10932

The beginning player adores taking finesses and this hand is designed to teach him to delay finesses in short suits when there is a longer side suit in the area. Best is to draw trump and play the ace and a diamond. If West follows to the second diamond with the lowest missing diamond it is safe to play low from dummy because East will have to win the trick. If East happens to have started with honor doubleton, East is endplayed. If East has a safe diamond exit and diamonds break 3-3, the spade finesse is unnecessary. If diamonds do not divide 3-3, the spade finesse is still available.

Also, when a second diamond is led and it is not clear who will take the trick, rise with dummy's king and play a third diamond. If diamonds break 3-3, you have the rest; if not, the spade finesse beckons. The key to the play is determining how the diamonds break before taking what could be a needless spade finesse.

#14 Defensive Boo Boo

Dlr: South
Vul: East-West
IMPs

North (dummy)
S. J1065
H. AQ
D. K765
C. 854

South (you)
S. KQ9842
H. J6
D. A4
C. K107

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	3S (1)	Pass
4S	All Pass		

(1) Limit raise

Opening lead: C9

East wins the ace and returns the CQ to your K, West following with the 3. At trick three you lead a low spade to the jack which holds, both following. What now?

Solution

The West hand: S. A7 H. 97532 D. Q1083 C. 93
The East hand: S. 3 H.K1084 D. J92 C. AQJ62

West has erred by not rising with the SA and switching to heart, and now it's up to you to take advantage. Play the ace-king and ruff a diamond and exit a club to East's jack. If East has no more diamonds, what can poor East do? A heart is unthinkable and a club return is a ruff and a sluff. Contract made.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Try to take advantage of a defensive error without returning the favor by making one of your own! (Not stripping the diamonds and exiting a club).

With AQ doubleton facing two small, the last thing you want to do is take that finesse. Try something else, anything else, first.

15 WRONG CONTRACT, AGAIN

Dlr: North

Vul: Both

North (dummy)

S. 5

H. A109642

D. AK5

C. 1083

South (you)

S. KJ3

H. QJ

D. QJ64

C. AQ94

North	East	South	West
1H	Pass	3NT (1)	All Pass

(1) Natural, 16-17

Opening lead: S6 East plays the ten and you scoop up the jack. What now?

Solution

The West hand: S. AQ962 H. 83 D. 10732 C. J4

The East hand: S. 10874 H. K75 D. 98 C. K765

You're in the wrong contract, but you can't be bothered with that now. There are two possible lines of play, one far better than the other.

(1) Take the heart finesse (into the danger hand, East). If it works, you take a zillion tricks, if it loses, they do! Why put all of your eggs in a 50% basket when you can:

(2) Cross to a diamond and run the C8. Say it loses to the jack and a heart comes back (best). Win the HA, and run the C10. If East has either club honor, you score three club tricks to go along with four diamonds and two aces. A 75% play is better than a 50% play.

#16 IMAGINATIVE RAISE

Dlr: West

Vul: Both

IMPs

North (dummy)

S. AJ

H. 742

D. K9743

C. J75

South (you)

S. K109843

H. K65

D. A2

C. A2

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1H	1S
Pass	2S!	Pass	4S
All Pass			

Opening lead: H3 East wins the HA and shifts to the CK. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand:	S. Q52	H. J73	D. J2	C. 98743
The East hand:	S. 76	H. AQ109	D. Q1085	C. KQ10

For openers it appears that East has opened a four card heart suit typically indicating a minimum hand. Rather than put all your eggs in the spade finesse basket, work on the diamonds. Win the CA and play the ace-king and ruff a diamond with a middle spade. If diamonds break 3-3, play the king-ace of spades and discard a loser on a top diamond. Presumably somebody will ruff with the SQ and you will remain with one more loser. Making four.

If diamonds divide 4-2, the length with East, and the third diamond is overruffed by West, you still have a chance to discard a loser by using both of dummy's spades as entries for further diamond establishment. Say the diamond is overruffed and a heart comes back. Win the king, cross to dummy with a spade, ruff a diamond setting up dummy's fifth diamond, return to a spade and if trumps are all gone, you can discard your other loser safely. In other words, you may not have to guess the location of the SQ if you play diamonds before spades.

Notice that when West overtrumps the third diamond holding SQxx, the hand can be made. However, if West NONCHALANTLY discards on the third diamond, there is a good chance you will play East for the SQ and go down.

#17 GOOD EVENING

Dlr: North
Vul: Neither
IMPs

North (dummy)
S. QJ98
H. A4
D. J765
C. AQ3

South (you)
S. AK1032
H. KQ5
D. Q94
C. 54

North	East	South	West
1D	Pass	1S	Pass
2S	Pass	4S	All Pass

Opening lead: C6 Plan the play. Spades are not 4-0)

Solution

The West hand:	S. 74	H. 10862	D. A103	C. J976
The East hand:	S. 65	H. J973	D. K82	C. K1082

Don't tell me you even thought about finessing the CQ. You have a gimme. Win CA, draw trumps, play three rounds of hearts discarding a club from dummy "evening" out the club suit and exit a club. (At this point both you and dummy each have one club. Whoever wins the trick has to break diamonds or give you a ruff and a sluff. Either way you only lose two more tricks.

THE BOTTOM LINE

After a hand has been stripped, equally divided side suits can be used as throw in suits to force a lead in another suit. Here you have the wherewithal to turn an unequally divided side suit (clubs) into an equally divided suit and then use the suit as your throw-in suit.

Anytime you have a side suit such as Jxx(x) facing Qxx, the idea is to force the opponents to lead that suit to you. Look for throw-in possibilities.

Another possibility is playing against relatives or good friends who will lead the suit for you.

#18 HEART ATTACK

Dlr: West
Vul: Neither
Matchpoints

North (dummy)
S. Q2
H. J32
D. J65
C. J5432

South (you)
S. AK109843
H. AQ
D. 32
C. A10

West	North	East	South
1D	Pass	1H	4S
All Pass			

Opening lead: DA

West continues with the king and a diamond, East playing high-low and then furnishing the queen as you ruff. Now what?

Solution

The West hand:	S. 76	H. K9	D. AKJ87	C. Q987
The East hand:	S. J5	H. 1087654	D. Q109	C. K6

Careful! After ruffing the diamond at trick three, the proper play at trick four is the HQ! Yes, you read correctly. If you cross to the SQ and take a heart finesse and it loses, you can't get back to dummy to enjoy the HJ. If you play the HAQ and East has six hearts to the king, he can return a heart while West still has trump and once again you can't use the HJ. Say East has the dreaded six hearts to the king. He wins the HK and shifts to a club. You win the Ace, cash both major suit aces and then enter dummy with a spade to discard your club on the HJ. Your play of the HQ only loses when West has two hearts and three spades. However, it wins whenever hearts are 5-3 regardless of who has the king.

The play of the heart suit reminds me of a story I tell my classes. Two ladies are discussing how their husbands play bridge and the first says, "My husband is the worst bridge player on the planet" The second one replies, "You must be kidding, mine plays much worse" The first one says, "O.K, let me tell you what happened last night. My husband was playing 7NT with 11 tricks outside of spades. The dummy had the SAQ of spades and the king was onside. My husband took the first 11 tricks, wound up in DUMMY with the SAQ of spades, and then led the queen from the dummy!" The second one says, "So what's the matter with that, against my husband that play works!"

#19 YOUR BEST SHOT?

Dlr: South
Vul: Both
IMPs

North (dummy)
S. 76
H. AKJ
D. K74
C. J10432

South (you)
S. A9
H. 5432
D. QJ109
C. AKQ

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: S3 East plays the Q. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. J8432 H. Q975 D. 62 C. 98
The East hand: S. KQ105 H. 108 D. A853 C. 765

There are three ways to attack this contract after winning the SA at trick one. (See Bottom Line on why you should not duck the opening lead).

1. The technical line: Cross to a high heart, cash the AKQ of clubs and take the heart finesse.
2. The thief's line: Lead the DJ at trick two hoping West ducks with the DA. If he does, you have stolen trick #9.
3. The insulting line: Cash the AKQ of clubs, cross to dummy with a heart and play two more clubs hoping the player with five spades discards one. If that happens, you can knock out the DA safely.

Line 3 is the weakest. The player with five spades would have to make a gross error to discard a spade on the clubs.

Line 2 has a chance. If West has something like Jxxxx of spades and the DA, he may not have realized that he has struck gold with the opening lead and may duck the DJ hoping partner has the queen and can lead a spade through. The good news is that West does have the spade holding you were rooting for, the bad news is that East has the DA. Line 1 is the winner.

THE BOTTOM LINE

With a notrump stopper such as Ax facing xx, unless the suit might be divided 7-2, do not hold up, particularly when a low card is led. It is not always easy for the opening leader to read your weakness if you win the ace. For example, if East plays the SK and West has Q10xx(x), West can't be sure who has the jack. In the actual diagram, West can't be sure who has the king.

When trying to steal a trick (diamonds) with the king in the dummy and the QJ10(x) in the closed hand, the most deceptive card to lead is your second highest honor, the jack.

When returning the suit partner has led (East winning the DA and wanting to clear spades), it is "normal" to return your lowest card with three cards remaining, however there are other considerations. Whenever you suspect partner may have more length than you, you may have to return your highest card to avoid blocking the suit. Here if you return a low spade, the suit is blocked. Also, given the lead, there is some chance that declarer has AJ doubleton in which case it is clearly right to play the king.

#20 NOT TOO SCIENTIFIC

Dlr: South

Vul: Both

IMPs

North (dummy)

S. 3

H. 10932

D. Q4

C. KJ10965

South (you)

S. AK75

H. A4

D. AK103

C. A84

South	West	North	East
2C(1)	Pass	3C	Pass
6C	All Pass		

(1) Strong and artificial

Opening lead: HQ. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. Q864 H. QJ8 D. 876 C. Q32

The East hand: S. J1092 H. K765 D. J952 C. 7

Give yourself two chances. Win the opening lead and play the AK of clubs. If the queen drops, you are playing for the overtrick. If the queen doesn't drop, lead a diamond to the queen and a diamond to the ten. If the finesse works, dump one of dummy's hearts on a high spade and the other two on diamonds. Your wish list must include that the player with the outstanding CQ has at least three diamonds and East has the DJ.