

#21 DON'T COME HOME LAME ON THIS ONE

Both sides vulnerable

Dealer North

IMPs

North

S. 10942

H. A3

D. QJ6

C. AQ109

South (you)

S. AKQJ76

H. Q5

D. AK5

C. J4

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	2S	Pass
3S	Pass	4D	Pass
4H	Dbl.	4NT	Pass
5H	Pass	5NT (1)	Pass
6S(2)	Pass	Pass	Pass

(1) Specific kings

(2) None outside of spades

Opening lead: Nine of hearts. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. 8 H. 98742 D. 1098 C. 8632

The East hand: S. 53 H. KJ106 D. 7432 C. K75

This one's a gimme. With the HK marked in East all you need to do is win the HA, draw trumps, strip the diamonds and exit a heart to East's king. Now sit back and wait for a ruff and a sluff return or a club smack into dummy's AQ. Next case.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When a lead directing double (East's double of 4H) tips off the location of an important missing honor, use that information to guide you in the play.

#22 THE CASE OF THE MISSING BLACK QUEENS

Dealer South
Vul: Neither
IMPs

North
S. KJ32
H. A4
D. Q65
C. K843

South (you)
S. A10654
H. K9
D. AKJ
C. AJ6

South	West	North	East
2NT	Pass	3C	Pass
3S	Pass	6S	All Pass

Opening lead: HQ Plan the play

Solution

The West hand: S. 8 H. QJ1073 D. 9432 C. Q102

The East hand: S. Q97 H. 8652 D. 1087 C. 975

The only way to go down on this hand is if the club finesse is offside and there is a spade loser. However, even that misfortune can be overcome if you are willing to take a risk that diamonds are 4-3.

Win the opening in your hand, cross to the king of spades, cash the HA and now three rounds of diamonds ending dummy. If nothing traumatic has happened thus far, lead a spade from dummy and if East follows, insert the 10. If the 10 wins, you are playing for an overtrick; if it loses, West, now spadeless is endplayed. If East shows out on the second spade, win the ace and exit a spade once again endplaying West. What if somebody ruffs the second or third round of diamonds? If West ruffs with a doubleton spade, West is endplayed. If East or West ruffs holding three spades and gets out with a spade, you have to fall back on the club finesse.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When faced with a two-way finesse in the trump suit plus a possible outside loser if one particular defender gets the lead, strip the hand (if possible) and then take a trump finesse into the player who will be endplayed upon winning the trick. Here you take the spade finesse into West because even if you lose to Qx, West can't lead a club safely. However, if the clubs in dummy were KJxx facing Axx, start by cashing the SA and eventually finesse spades into East if West follows to the second spade. If you lose to the S Qx, East has to break clubs or give you a ruff and a sluff. If West shows out on the second spade, win the king and toss East in with the SQ. You've got them coming and going.

#23 FORCING STAYMAN

Dlr: North

Vul: Both

North

S. Q75

H. K102

D. KJ87

C. AK4

South (you)

S. K10843

H. AJ95

D. 1096

C. J

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	2S*	Pass
3S	Pass	4S	All Pass

*Forcing to 2NT or three of a major (not many play this way nowadays)

Opening lead: Queen of diamonds

You cover smartly with the king, East wins the ace and returns the three of diamonds, West playing the deuce. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. 92 H. Q83 D. Q2 C. Q86532

The East hand: S. AJ6 H. 764 D. A543 C. 1097

In order to minimize the danger of a diamond ruff, win the diamond return in dummy and lead a low spade towards your hand. If East plays low, play the king. If it holds, not much bad can happen to you; lead a second spade and if West follows, you might as well play the queen. If it loses to the ace, as expected, and East gives West a diamond ruff, also as expected, that will be their last trick.

The trap is NOT to lead a spade to the queen. If that loses and East gives West a diamond ruff, you are suddenly in the uncomfortable position of having to guess spades to make your contract since the opponents remain with two spades including the jack.

Notice that if East jumps up with the SA at trick three and gives West a diamond ruff, you will have no trouble picking up the SJ because you have the queen and king of spades to draw the two outstanding trump.

THE BOTTOM LINE

When threatened with an adverse ruff missing the AJxxx of trump and no other losers, assume the PARTNER of the player who can ruff has the ace of trump and if your king and queen of trump are split between your hand and dummy, lead low towards an honor forcing the player with the likely ace of trump (in this case, East) to play second, not last, to the trick.

#24 COUNT YOUR TRICKS!

Dlr: West
Vul: Both
Imps

North
S. 9432
H. A84
D. QJ10
C. A52

South (you)
S. KQ5
H. KQ10932
D. A5
C. 76

West	North	East	South
1D	Pass	Pass	2H*
Pass	4H	Pass	Pass
Pass			

*Intermediate strength

Opening lead: KC. Hearts are NOT 4-0. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. A8 H. 6 D. K87643 C. KQ43
The East hand: S. J1076 H. J75 D. 95 C. J1098

You are looking at 10 tricks: 6 hearts, 2 diamonds, one spade and one club.

Best is to win the second club, cash the KH, and then make the key play of a LOW diamond. There isn't much West can do after winning the king. If he plays a third club, you ruff, cash a second high trump, play the DA, and enter dummy with a trump to discard a spade on a high diamond. The reason for leading a low diamond instead of the ace and a diamond is that East might have a doubleton diamond. If so, then West can lead a third diamond for East to ruff before you can use your established diamond for a spade discard. Sorrow.

THE BOTTOM LINE

At a trump contract, adverse trump still outstanding, with Ax facing QJx, and an unassailable side suit entry to the hand with the QJx, the safest play for two tricks (if the lead is in the Ax hand) is to lead low to the QJx guarding against a 6-2 break in either hand.

#25 WHO'S GOT WHAT?

As declarer you frequently have distributional information picked up from the opening lead and the return. In this quiz you will be given sufficient clues to answer the counting questions beneath the diagram.

Assume when you are playing a suit or notrump contract and the opponents are using fourth best leads.

North (dummy)
D. 973

South
D. A106

1. West leads the D2. How do you assume the diamonds are divided?
2. West leads the D2, East plays the J and you play low. At trick two East returns the D4. Now how do you assume the diamond are divided?
3. Given the sequence of plays in #2, how do you visualize the diamond honors around the table?
4. West leads the D4, East plays the DQ and you duck. East returns the D8, you win the Ace and West plays the 2. How do you think the diamonds are divided?
5. West leads the 4D, East plays the DJ and you play low. East continues with the DK and West plays the D2. How do you visualize the diamonds around the table?

Answers

1. Diamonds figure to be 4-3, West having 4.
2. It now looks like West has led from a three card suit and East has four. If East had three diamonds, East would return his higher diamond.
3. It looks like East has QJxx and West Kxx.
4. It appears West has led from KJxxx and East has the Q8 doubleton.
5. It appears that West has led from a doubleton and East has KQJxx. If East had KJ doubleton, East would have played the king first.

#26 A NEW LOOK

Dlr: South
Vul: Neither

North
S. 10
H. KJ1054
D. K1092
C. KJ10

South (you)
S. QJ32
H. A
D. A65
C. Q8765

South	West	North	East
1C	Pass	1H	1S
Pass	2S	Dbl*	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

*Takeout

Opening lead: S5

East wins the SA and returns the S6. Which spade do you play and what is your plan?

Solution

The West hand: S. K85 H. Q9876 D. J83 C. 42
The East hand: S. A9764 H. 32 D. Q74 C. A93

The bidding tells you that the spades are 5-3 and it is likely that West has led from the Kxx. If you play a spade honor at trick three, West will win and return a spade overtaken by East driving out your remaining honor. When East, the likely holder of the CA, gets in, you will be defeated, East-West cashing four spades and a club. The answer is to play low on East's spade return. West can win cheaply and cash the SK, but you remain with a spade stopper and time to drive out the CA and develop nine tricks.

THE BOTTOM LINE

This is an unusual spade combination that it pays to be familiar with.

#27 Sporting Raise

Dlr: West

Vul: Both

IMPs

North

S. 765

H. KJ105

D. J765

C Q5

South (you)

S. AK1098

H. 73

D. AKQ9

C. 82

West	North	East	South
1C	Pass	1H	1S
Dbl(1)	2S (2)	Pass	4S
All Pass			

(1) Support double showing three card heart support

(2) A terrible bid. Do not make "sporting raises" when most or all of your strength is in the suit or suits the opponents are bidding.

Opening lead: HA

East discourages in hearts and West shifts to the D10 to your king. Say you continue with the AK of spades and West follows with two low spades and East follows low and then the jack. Where do you go from here?

Solution

The West hand: S. Q32 H. AQ4 D. 109 C. KJ976

The East hand: S. J4 H. 9862 D. 843 C. A1043

Once the defenders do not cash their two club winners, you have been given a reprieve. However, in order to take advantage of their generosity, you must decide which opponent is more likely to hold the queen of hearts.

If you think West has it, you can take a simple finesse and wind up with an overtrick. You will be able to discard both of your clubs losers before West can ruff in. If you think East has it, lead a heart to the king and then run the jack, discarding a club, if East does not cover.

If East covers, ruff, and try to enter dummy with a diamond in order to discard a club on the ten of hearts. What are the clues?

The clues comes from the bidding and the club suit. If West had both club honors he would have led one, and if West had the ace of clubs without the king, he would have cashed the ace at trick two to find out if partner had the king. Clearly West has the king of clubs and East has the ace.

So what does West have for his first seat vulnerable opening bid? The most he can have in spades is the queen, the most he can have in clubs is the KJ for a total of 6 HCP in the blacks. He has no points in diamonds and needs both the ace and queen of hearts to even have a minimum opening bid. Lead a heart to the jack. As the cards lie you make an overtrick.

Additionally, this hand illustrates a defensive principle. Given the bidding, the lead, and the heart strength in dummy, East's play at trick one should be suit preference, not attitude. After all, West already knows how East must feel about hearts. If that agreement is in place, West will shift to a club at trick two and defeat the contract.

#28 You Don't Want To Know

North

S. AQ73

H. QJ108

D. -

C. KQ653

South (you)

S. KJ1095

H. 9732

D. A10

C. A10

Contract 6S

Lead: QD

You do not want to know the bidding (they were silent) that eventually landed you in this godforsaken contract. Of course it was your partner's fault, but at least you didn't get a heart lead. Spades are 2-2 (why am I so good to you?) Plan the play.

Solution

Basically you have to bring in dummy's clubs for five tricks so you can pitch three hearts from your hand. The best play for five club tricks with this combination is to lead low to the ten which is better than playing the AKQ. This play loses to Jxx in the West hand (If West has Jx, you can't take five tricks anyway). However, your play gains when East has Jx or Jxxx.

#29 That Extra Chance

Dealer North

Vul. Both

North

S: 1093

H: A432

D: J85

C: AK7

South (you)

S: A8765

H: KJ5

D: K103

C: Q3

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	1S	Pass
1NT	Pass	2C (1)	Pass
2S	Pass	4S	All Pass

(1) Checkback

Opening lead: D2 (fourth best). East wins the D-A and returns the D-9. What is your plan?

Solution

The West hand: S. KJ H. Q96 D. Q742 C. 10752

The East hand: S. Q42 H. 1087 D. C. J964

You are off two trump tricks, you have already lost the D-A, and it looks very much like West has led from Qxxx. Clearly you should rise with the D-K. Only someone with a strong death wish would play low on the second diamond. Having won the D-K, cash the S-A (you will see why in a moment) and then play three rounds of clubs discarding your losing diamond. With the lead in dummy, ruff dummy's last diamond, stripping that suit, and exit a spade.

If West has to win this trick and has no more spades, you will not need to take the heart finesse. West will either have to lead a heart or give you a ruff and a sluff; either return is instant death. If the opponents can untangle their spades, cash two spades, and get out safely upon winning your spade exit, you can still fall back on the heart finesse.

Tip

Finesses seldom work in problem hands- in mine they never work! Just kidding. And why did you cash the S-A early? Well, if West was born with the Kx and didn't have the presence of mind to unblock the king he could be thrown in later in the hand. As it was, West had KJ doubleton and couldn't avoid the endplay no matter what.

#30 PERFECT CONTRACT

Dlr: South

Vul: E-W

North

S. AJ5

H. Q93

D. 76

C. K8754

South (you)

S. KQ1074

H. KJ102

D. Q

C. A93

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	2C	2D
2H	4D*	4S	Pass
Pass	Pass		

*Preemptive

Opening lead: D2

East wins the opening lead with the king and continues with the DA. Plan the play.

Solution

The West hand: S. 2 H. A865 D. 9852 C. J1062

The East hand: S. 9863 H. 74 D. AKJ1043 C. Q

Better discard a club at trick two, a sure loser in any case. You have to guard against 4-1 spades (likely on the bidding). If you ruff and find spades 4-1, you have to desist playing spades after drawing two rounds and go after hearts. If the player with four spades has a doubleton heart, clever opponents will organize a heart ruff to defeat you. If you discard a club at trick two, avoiding the long hand force, you will be able to draw four rounds of trump before attacking hearts.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Jump raises of overcalls are preemptive.

Consider discarding a certain loser rather than ruffing in the long hand if a bad trump break is likely or if no ruff in a side suit is imminent.