

The Bridge Student

by Jay Apfelbaum

For October, we have an unusual defensive problem. You are East.

Board: 15
Dealer: South
Vul: North/South
Form: Matchpoints

	North		East
♠	Q 7 5		♠ 3
♥	A 10 8 6 3		♥ 9 7 4 2
♦	Q 8 7		♦ J 9 6 3 2
♣	10 5		♣ 9 6 2

The auction:

West	North	East	South
---	---	---	1♠
2♣	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Partner leads the ♥Q. Plan your defense. You are playing standard signals.

We get these hands sometimes, and there is a tendency to drift away to more interesting thoughts (such as the previous hand when we had 28 high card points). We do have a partner, however, and that partner may be in need of whatever help we can provide. So, let us do what we can.

Declarer is about to win the ♥K. Partner might get a little excited if we play our ♥7, but he should calm down after Declarer wins the trick. Hopefully, he will realize we are giving him a “count signal.” Playing standard signals, playing a higher card first and a lower one second can be a count signal showing an even number of cards in that suit. Do not make the mistake of playing anything other than the highest card you can afford. Playing the third best could show the lowest of three.

We play our ♥7 and, as expected, Declarer wins with the ♥K. He plays on trump, and wins the first round in dummy. We get to discard on the second round. This time, we discard our ♣2. This denies any significant value in that suit. Partner wins the third round of Spades, and we now discard our ♦2. This also denies any significant value in that suit.

Partner now knows that he is on his own, and hopefully he will make a good decision. Here is the complete hand:

	North	
	♠ Q 7 5	
	♥ A 10 8 6 3	
	♦ Q 8 7	
	♣ 10 5	
West		East
♠ A 9 6 4		♠ 3
♥ Q J		♥ 9 7 4 2
♦ 10 5		♦ J 9 6 3 2
♣ A Q J 8 7		♣ 9 6 2
	South	
	♠ K J 10 8 2	
	♥ K 5	
	♦ A K 4	
	♣ K 4 3	

Partner should realize that Declarer has all the remaining high card points, but only two hearts. Holding the ♠9, Partner can hold Declarer to ten tricks by playing his second heart. Declarer cannot ruff out the heart suit without setting up Partner's trump. If Declarer comes to hand to draw Partner's last trump, he does not have the entries to set up and cash the long heart. Declarer can take four Spade tricks, three Heart tricks and three Diamond tricks, but that leaves the defenders with one Spade trick and two Club tricks.

The beauty of duplicate contract bridge is that every hand can be meaningful. Did you find the plays to help your partner?

And now it is time for next month's hand. A bidding problem.

Board: 17
 Dealer: North
 Vul: None
 Form: Matchpoints

	South
	♠ 9
	♥ Q J 9 6 5 3
	♦ 8 4 2
	♣ K 10 7

The auction:

West	North	East	South
---	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♦	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♠	Pass	?

What now? The answer next month. Those who want to express their opinion should contact the webmaster. I will try to mention all those who take the time to give me a thoughtful answer.