

The Bridge Student

by Jay Apfelbaum

For October, we have a play problem.

Board: 32
Dealer: West
Vul: East/West
Form: Matchpoints

North
♠ A Q J 10 6
♥ A K J 10
♦ 5
♣ 9 5 4

South
♠ 2
♥ 8 3 2
♦ A K 8 2
♣ A K Q J 8

A quick word about the auction. South's 2♣ bid was game forcing, as was the 2NT rebid. North's 3♣ bid promised some extra values. North's 5♥ response promised two aces but denied the ♣Q. South bid 7♣ because he needed a great board to have a chance to win the event. West leads the ♣2. You play low from dummy and East contributes the ♣10.

We have ten tricks with our side suit Aces and Kings plus five trump tricks. We can easily ruff a diamond in dummy to bring our total to eleven. A second diamond ruff is possible, but there is little sense in trying for it. We can get two extra tricks in either major by guessing which suit to play on. So, we cash a diamond and then ruff one in dummy. Now we draw trumps. They divide 3-2, so we have to discard something from dummy.

Here is the auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♥	Pass	2NT
Pass	3♣	Pass	4NT
Pass	5♥	Pass	7♣
All Pass			

We must discard a spade from dummy to keep our chances in both major suits. The reason? The odds of successfully getting two extra spade tricks by ruffing are less than taking a successful heart finesse. So, we have to play to combine our chances in the major suits. First, play to the ♥A and then cash the ♠A. Now lead the ♠Q and try to guess whether the ruffing finesse will succeed. Correctly judging East's reaction to this sequence will be very important to making a winning decision.

If you think that East does not have the ♠K, ruff. It may be that West will have a doubleton King and it will fall at this point. If nothing exciting happens, take the heart finesse. This line of play will succeed whenever West holds the ♥Q or whenever either defender has a doubleton ♠K. It will also make when East holds a singleton ♥Q. Assuming you are a great reader of human reactions, the odds of success will be much higher.

Here is the complete hand:

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

By the way, are you up to the challenge of playing low when Declarer calls for the ♠Q? With no reaction at all? If so, I want you playing on my team.

And now it is time for next month's hand. A defensive problem. You are South and hold:

Board: 10
 Dealer: East
 Vul: Both
 Form: Matchpoints

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

Here is the auction:

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

Partner leads the ♥3. Declarer calls for the ♥Q, which you cover with the ♥K. Declarer ruffs with the ♠3 and leads the ♠7 to partner's ♠J and the ♠K in dummy. You follow with the ♠2. Declarer continues by ruffing another heart. What do you play and why?

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.