

## The Bridge Student

by Jay Apfelbaum

September 2009 brings us a bonus column. We begin with the auction, and a lesson in declarer play.

Board: 8  
Dealer: West  
Vul: None  
Form: IMP's

North  
♠ Q 6  
♥ 7  
♦ A K J 5 4  
♣ K 5 4 3 2

South  
♠ A K 7 3  
♥ K Q 4  
♦ 6 3 2  
♣ Q 10 7

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Against this rather pedestrian auction, West leads the ♣6. You call for a small club from Dummy. East wins with the ♣A and returns the ♥J. You cover with the ♥Q, West wins with the ♥A and continues with the ♥2. We discard the ♦4 from Dummy and East plays the ♥8. What do we do now?

First, let us be thankful we got a club lead. It gave us a tempo that we will need considering the ♥A was positioned poorly for us. Now it is time to count our tricks. We start with eight (three spades, one heart, two diamonds and two clubs), which means we need to develop one more trick. This could come from diamonds (successful finesse), clubs (long club) or spades (getting help from a defender). The problem is that the defenders will be able to take enough tricks to defeat the contract once they get on lead.

We need a plan that will maximize our chances to get that ninth trick. This is a good time to imagine what each defender holds. It looks as though West led from a four card club suit. If so, then West will hold at most four hearts. East has only one club, which gives him just enough room to hold the length in Spades, Hearts and Diamonds. That makes a diamond finesse less attractive, but it does give us the beginning of a plan to play the hand.

Here are some hands that East might hold.

East #1 ♠ ??? ♥ J 10 9 8 ?? ♦ ??? ♣ A	East #2 ♠ ???? ♥ J 10 9 8 ?? ♦ ?? ♣ A	East #3 ♠ ???? ♥ J 10 9 8 ? ♦ ??? ♣ A
---	---	---

In all three of these cases, East will have to tell us something about his hand if we cash two club tricks. East #1 is likely to discard a spade. This probably means that West holds the long spade. East #2 is likely to discard hearts based on not having any entries to run the suit. East #3 is likely to stew about if holding the ♦Q, and then discarding hearts. If East discards two hearts, it is very likely he holds the long diamonds and spades.

The next question is whether to win this heart or duck. For East #1, that would be fatal. We will need our third heart to put East on lead so that we can get an extra diamond trick. For East #2, we could play the ♦A and ♦K and then give West the third diamond (if the Queen does not fall). We would have to duck the second heart for this line to have any chance. For East #3, we need to duck the second heart so that we can force East to discard all of his remaining hearts on the high clubs.

Which of these hands is the most likely? The clue lies in West's return of the ♥2. Good defenders will return a low card if they started with four. There may be some question whether West would know this, considering the choice of opening lead. However, this gives us something to go on.

The most likely hand of the three is East #3. Therefore, the right move at this point is to let the defenders win this trick and win the heart continuation. We will discard a second diamond from Dummy. Remember that we need only one more trick for our contract.

Here is the hand after we win the third round of hearts:

North
♠ Q 6
♥ 7
♦ A K J 5-4
♣ K 5 4 3 2
South
♠ A K 7 3
♥ <del>K</del> Q 4
♦ 6 3 2
♣ Q 10 7

We play two rounds of clubs, on which East discards two hearts. That probably means East is holding the spade and diamond winners. So, we play four spades to put East on lead. The forced return of a diamond gives us nine tricks (3 spades, 1 heart, 3 diamonds and 2 clubs). Here is the entire hand.

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

Notice that if we win the second heart, East can defeat the contract by keeping the ♥6. That will allow West to overtake with his ♥7 and cash the setting tricks. By ducking the second heart, we “rectified the count” so we could squeeze East out of his heart winners. The lesson of this hand is that running a long suit can sometimes improve our chances for success.