

Board 3

South Deals
None Vul

	♠ A 9 6		
	♥ Q 8 7		
	♦ K 7 6		
	♣ Q J 8 6		
♠ 7 4 3	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> N W E S </div>	♠ 10 8 5	
♥ K 9 6 4 2		♥ A J 5	
♦ J 9		♦ Q 10 8 4	
♣ 9 7 5		♣ 10 4 3	
	♠ K Q J 2		
	♥ 10 3		
	♦ A 5 3 2		
	♣ A K 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 N
Pass	3 N	All pass	

Auction Commentary: A 1 NT opener says "Partner, I have 15-17 HCP, and I have a balanced hand." It does NOT say you can stop all suits. Remember that when you open 1 NT, you have completely described your hand to partner, and you are no longer in charge of the auction. Partner will get you to the right contract, so don't worry about the ♥ suit and no stopper! (And responder, although you're excited about all your points opposite partner's 1 NT, remember that 1 NT is a limited bid, and although you have lots of points, it's not enough for a slam.)

Opening Lead: 4 ♥ When the notrump auction does not include a Stayman inquiry or a Jacoby Transfer, it is best to lead a major.

Defensive Commentary: Remember 3rd hand is ***only as high as necessary!*** When the lead is exactly 4th best from our longest suit, we apply the Rule of 11: subtract the spot of the card that was led, (the 4), from 11. The remainder is how many cards, higher than the 4, are in the other three hands combined. So East knows that declarer has exactly ONE CARD higher than the 4. East doesn't see the K♥ in the dummy, so declarer might have it. Should East play third hand VERY HIGH, and insert the A♥ on trick #1? No! If you do, and declarer does actually hold the K♥, you're going to give declarer an undeserved trick. They will then win both the K♥ and Q♥. If they have both honors, declarer is entitled to one of them. (But let's keep it to just one!)


So, when declarer calls for a low card on the first trick, West should insert the J♥, keeping the A♥ over the Q♥. When it wins, play the A♥ from your remaining doubleton (to unblock the suit), return the 5♥, and defenders defeat the contract taking 5 tricks.

Should defenders blindly play 3rd hand very high on the 1st trick, and win the A♥, the declarer will not go down, and instead will make 11 tricks!

Board 6

East Deals

None Vul

<p>♠ Q 6 4 ♥ Q J 8 5 ♦ A K 8 4 ♣ 9 6</p>	<p>♠ A J 7 ♥ 6 4 ♦ Q J 9 3 ♣ 10 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ K 5 2 ♥ K 10 9 3 2 ♦ 7 2 ♣ K Q J</p>	<p>♠ 10 9 8 3 ♥ A 7 ♦ 10 6 5 ♣ A 8 7 3</p>
			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♥	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 N	Pass
4 ♥	All pass		

Auction Commentary: Opener show 12-21 HCP and 5 or more hearts. Responder - with at least 11 HCP goes slowly and bids 2 ♦ (forcing for one round) to hear opener's rebid. 2 NT = 12-14 HCP, balanced, with 5-3-3-2 shape. With no interest in slam opposite a minimum, responder places the contract in 4 ♥.

Opening Lead: 10♠ - top of a sequence We do not lead Aces from spaces and there was a choice of two unbid suits.

Play Commentary: Declarer has 3 missing aces and could lose a 2nd spade trick. Without the spade lead, declarer could play on clubs, pitching a spade from dummy on the 3rd round, and eliminate the chance of a 2nd spade loser. The trap to avoid would be playing first on trumps, giving the defense the time needed to possibly set up their second spade trick. Declarer should still play clubs first, even with the spade lead, to give them the best chance of pitching a spade before the defense can grab it.


Defensive Commentary: (Only 3rd hand high as necessary)

The 10♠ denies the J♠ and promises the 9♠. On correct defense, declarer has the following losers: 2 ♠ -1 ♥ -1 ♣. Third hand must be careful at trick one to get the job done!. When declarer plays low from dummy, North must play the 7♠. This is an exception to 3rd hand high; when dummy has an honor in the led suit and 3rd hand holds surrounding honors, 3rd hand must keep the dummy's honor surrounded. Otherwise, declarer will be able to score both the Queen and the King. South wins the ♣ A and continues with the spades through dummy and now North with the ♠ A J will win two spade tricks to defeat the contract.

Takeaway: Learning when to duck is as essential in bridge as it is in life. Sometimes, we have to save our Ace until the next round. When we can "see" an honor in the dummy, this is a likely time.

Board 8

West Deals
None Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 N	Pass	3 ♣	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 N	All pass

Auction Commentary - East looks for a 4-4 major suit fit and comes to rest in 3 NT.

Opening Lead - ♦ 5

Play Commentary - With 28 HCP, West would expect to make 9 tricks without much trouble, but there are always exceptions. West starts with 8 top tricks, and can find a 9th in either of 3 suits.

Defensive Commentary - If partner has led from the ♦ K, either the ♦ A or ♦ Q will win the first trick. We can continue with the other high diamond, then the last one, and we will get all of the tricks we are entitled to? What if declarer has ♦ K, and partner has only ♦ J?

Let's look into the future. If we win the ♦ A and continue with the ♦ Q, declarer will duck. Her plan is to win the 3rd round of diamonds and play on clubs. If the diamonds are 4-4 between the defenders, there is no danger. The defense can win 1 club and 3 diamonds, and declarer will win 2 spades, 3 hearts, 1 diamond and 3 clubs. What if diamonds are 5-3? If declarer loses a club trick, it is curtains, UNLESS, the person who wins the ♣ Q has no more diamonds to play! South is the one who is likely out of diamonds, so West leads the ♣ J out of their hand and lets it ride if North plays low. 9 tricks, viola!

Now, let's look at what happens if South plays the Queen. West does not know where the ♦ A is. If they duck, and North has ♦ AJ, well, it doesn't bear contemplating. West is forced to win, and now, they have no safety net when it comes to the club suit. If they get it wrong, it's curtains. If they get it right, congratulate them, and move on to the next hand. We aren't always rewarded for our brilliance!

So, for south, playing the ♦ Q at trick 1 is clearly correct. It will either win, or it will put maximum pressure on West.

Takeaway: Again, it is often right to not play our ace immediately!