

## PLANNING

Reading a bridge column in the newspaper, or in the Bulletin is great practice for playing at the table. You know that there is a lesson in the hand, so you try to work it out. Since most of the hands feature declarer play, you cover the E/W hands, and look for the problem. Sometimes you see it, sometimes you don't. I have been reading the columns since college days, and still do. In fact, on most days that is the only thing that I look at in the paper, except maybe the crossword puzzle.

When you are declarer, you should look at every hand, before you play to trick one, and use the declarer's mantra,

**Count your winners.** If you do not have enough of them, try to figure out where to develop some more: set up a long suit, take a finesse or two, figure out an end play to make them help you.

**Count your losers.** If you have too many of them, where can you get rid of them.

**What can go wrong.** If something could foil your plans, is there anything that you can do about it.

Working out the hands in the columns should help prepare you for hands at the table. Not every table hand has a problem, but many do, and you often can solve them. Look at these hands from the Richmond paper. We should get them right at the table, but if we are not careful often we will get them wrong, I have changed one card in the second hand, to illustrate the issues for the defenders. In the second hand, East had the ace and king of hearts in the paper.

**Q 5 3**      **South opened 1Diamond, West overcalled one spade, and N/S**  
**J 10 3**      **reached 3 NT. West led a spade, and South took the king.**  
**A 8 6 4**      South counted one spade, three hearts, five diamonds and the ace  
**8 3 2**      of clubs, ten top tricks. Losers were not a problem. So, the began  
by leading a heart to the dummy. West won the third heart and  
**K 6**      shifted to a club. Declarer won, and started diamonds. When West  
**K Q 7 4**      showed out on the first diamond, he was down one. He forgot to  
**K Q 9 7 2**      ask, **what could go wrong and what can I do about it.** If he had  
**A J**      read a lifetime of bridge columns, he would have realized that  
diamonds might not split, and if East held four diamonds, he could pick the suit  
up by leading towards his hand twice. But, since he needed two dummy

entries, he needed to get there, in hearts at least once. At trick two he should lead to the ace of diamonds, **making four**. The East/West hands:

A J 10 9 2  
 A 9 6 2  
 ---  
 Q 10 7 4  
 that could defeat the contract.

8 7 4  
 8 5  
 J 10 5 3  
 K 9 6 5

How did West know to shift to a club hopefully on the third heart, East signaled for a club shift. Even if he did not, West could see that there was no other play

	<b>Q J 2</b>	
	<b>Q J 8 4 3</b>	
	<b>K</b>	
	<b>K 9 5 2</b>	
<b>8 6</b>		<b>10 9 7 4</b>
<b>A 7</b>		<b>K 6 5 2</b>
<b>Q 10 7 5 2</b>		<b>9 8 5 3</b>
<b>Q 10 7 6</b>		<b>8</b>
	<b>A K 3 2</b>	
	<b>10 9</b>	
	<b>A J 6</b>	
	<b>A J 4 3</b>	

**You are in 3 NT. They have not bid. West led the 5 of diamonds.** Dummy's king won, and South took stock. **He had four spades, two diamonds and two clubs. He needed some hearts.** South had a good idea. If West won the first heart, he could not attack diamonds, and South was safe. If that did not work, he could take a club finesse later. He led a heart from dummy at trick two. East was wide awake, He knew he could get in only once in order to lead diamonds through South, so he rose with the King of hearts and returned a diamond. West won the Queen and cleared the suit. When the club finesse lost, South was down one. Good thought, but not good enough.

South had 8 top tricks, and only needed one extra trick. If he had read enough bridge columns, he would have realized that clubs should provide a third trick no matter how they split, This is a standard **safety play**. When you hold A K J 9 of a suit, in this layout, if you cash the Ace (or king) in the hand which has the Jack, and then lead to the nine, no matter how the E/W cards split, you will make three tricks. On this hand, if West ducks, the nine will win, and if he goes up, win the king and play the nine, which will force the ten.

Try this. Lay the hands out, and move the E/W cards around. Give any four or five of them to each side, and you will see that it always works.

Give extra credit to East for defeating this contract by going up with the King. He had to ask himself at trick two: What is declarer trying to do? Can I contribute to the defense. It had to be right. If declarer had the ace, wouldn't he have taken a finesse to insure the contract?

And here is a hand from a recent Bulletin.

**A 9 7 4 3**      You are in six spades, and have already decided that if the  
**A 6**              diamond finesse works, you can make 7. Then the trump  
**A J 4**             suit does not split, East holding all three outstanding trump.  
**A 8 7**             Now you need the diamond finesse to make 6. Can you do  
                     better? This hand is called the Dieter's special. What do you  
**K 8 6 5 2**        before you get on the scale? You take off all of your clothes  
**K 7 4**             and go to the bathroom, in other words, you strip and  
**K 5 3**             eliminate. <I did not invent this description, it comes from a  
**K 4**                book written by Pat Sheinwold.> Cash the Ace, King of hearts  
and trump a heart, and now do the same in clubs. You have stripped all of the  
side suits from your hand, and eliminated all of the safe exits in the East hand.  
Now play the third spade. East wins and is trapped. If he plays a diamond, you  
get a free finesse, and if he plays a side suit, you can trump in one hand and  
throw a diamond from the other, making 6.

All of the declarer plays in these three hands are plays that every player can make. They just require some thought and some planning. The only difficult play is the East play of the king of hearts, and even that one should be worked out.

If anyone has any interest in lessons like this, until we can get back to live bridge, please email me and let me know. I will post one or two of them a week.

I will always be glad to answer your bridge questions about any issue, as long as you accept the fact that these answers are opinions. Other players will, and often do disagree with much of my bridge theory.

**[maddhtr@hotmail.com](mailto:maddhtr@hotmail.com)**

Bob Pustilnik