

PLANNING, PART II

Here are four hands from recent bridge columns in the local paper. Each of them goes back to the questions that we need to ask before we play to trick one. Count my winners. If we are in no trump, and need more winners to make our contract, we ask where can the necessary winners come from. If in a suit contract, count our losers, and if there are more than we can handle, ask what we can do about them. And then ask the critical question: What can go wrong and can we fix the problem. Oh, yes, and sometimes we need to ask if there is a hidden solution that would work better than our plan. This first hand is an example of that question.

K 10 3	The opponents are silent, and you get to 4 spades. West
8 3 2	leads a small heart. You have six spades, and three other
8 7 5 4 2	aces, 9 winners. The lazy player would see the diamond
A 3	finesse, and would make the contract half of the time. Today
	West had the king, and you would have gone down. The
	player who asked could I do better would look at the
A Q J 9 8 7	diamond suit, and think that diamonds will break 3/3 or
A 6 5	4/2 more than 60% of the time, and once every year or two
A Q	the king will be singleton. He will cash the ace of spades,
J 5	and the ace of diamonds, (darn, the king did not fall) and
	play the useless queen of diamonds. When both follow, you are home, They
	will get in, cash two hearts, and probably lead a club. Win the ace of clubs,
	trump a diamond in your hand, play a spade to dummy, trump another
	diamond, if necessary, and get back to the dummy with a spade to cash the
	last diamond, and get rid of the small club in your hand. Note, you cashed a
	high spade first. If spades were 4/0, this line would not work because you
	cannot pull trump and wind up in the dummy. In that case you would have
	taken the diamond finesse. This hand would be so much easier if you had a
	small diamond instead the queen, you would have had no choice but to play
	for the diamonds to break.

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

A Q J 9 8 4
6
8
A Q J 9 5

You fell in love with your hand, and kept bidding until they pushed you into four spades -they could actually make four hearts - and West doubles, West leads the king and then the ace of diamonds. You look at their convention card, and realize that he is showing a doubleton. You have at least ten winners in the black suits, unless they can get two spade tricks. No problem then unless West has four spades, and then there is no hope. Don't forget to ask "What can go wrong, if West only has three spades, namely the king, the ten and a small one." Your plan is to trump the second diamond, and play the ace and queen of spades, and when you get back in, pull the last trump. But West takes the second spade, plays a heart to his partner, and East leads a third diamond. You are dead. If you trump high, West wins the ten of spades later; and if you trump low, he wins it now, Down one. If you asked what could go wrong, you would have foreseen this possibility, and you would have discarded a heart on West's second diamond. You had to lose that trick anyway, so you might as well do it now, and cut their communications. This is called a **loser on loser play**, when you get rid of a losing card on another losing card.

West held

K 10 2
J 9 7 3 2
A K
8 4 2

If you had not made this play, you were going to go down.

The next hand is a very tricky hand. It takes a great deal of foresight on behalf of both sides.

J 4 The opponents are silent, and you get to three no trump.
8 3 West leads a small heart, a great start for you. You now
A J 9 8 7 3 have two hearts, a club and a spade, and if you can get
J 8 2 five diamonds, you are home. The standard play is to cash
 the king of diamonds, and finesse for the queen, and if the
A 10 5 queen is in the West hand, and if he only has three of
A Q 7 them, you are home. That play will work about 1/3 of the
K 10 time. Can you do better? Look at the diamond spots. You
A 10 9 7 4 have all of them except the queen. If you start by playing
the 10 and overtaking it with the jack, if East wins the queen, you can overtake
the king with the ace, and run the diamonds. So you make that play, and the
Jack holds the trick. Now, perhaps you wished that you had finessed in the
first place. Well, try plan B, You have all of the club spots except the King
and Queen; so play the 8 of clubs, and let it ride. West wins the king and
plays a heart. You are in, and you hold your breath, and play the King to the
ace. Both follow, but no queen. Well, your forethought has paid off. You
play the jack of clubs, and it holds, both following. Then you play the two of
clubs, and the suit comes home, making 9 tricks. East says "nice play," and
shows you his hand

K 9 7 6 He figured out what you were up to, and ducked the with
J 9 3 the queen of diamonds at trick three.

Q 5 2

Q 6 5

The club suit coming home is about 75%, but you need two entires to set up the suit. If you had simply let the ten ride from you hand, you could not lead clubs twice even if it held the trick. You make the contract every time East takes the first diamond, whenever the queen is doubleton, and whenever you get a favorable club break, probably about 90% in all.

The last hand is interesting, because you might play it differently at match points.

Q J 6	You are in three no trump, and West leads the jack of hearts. You duck and win the second heart. You have five clubs, two hearts, and the ace of spades. If the spade finesse wins, you have nine tricks. And look at that great diamond suit. If the queen of diamonds is on sides, you have four diamond tricks for a total of eleven. In fact, you are sorry that you ducked the first trick, because if the spade finesse works, too, you have 12 tricks. So what line do you take?
5 3	
K J 8 7 4	
Q 3 2	
A 4	
A K 2	
10 9 6	
A K J 10 5	

There are a lot of traps here. If you go to the dummy with the queen of clubs, and take the spade finesse, and it loses, you cannot go back to the dummy to cash the jack. Did you notice that? If you play the diamonds, and the queen is in the East hand, he returns a heart, and you still have to knock out the Ace of diamonds. If it is in the hand with the long hearts, you go down.

If this a team game, or if you are playing for money, overtricks are not important. You want to make certain that you make the contract. Cash the ace of spades at trick two, and play a spade to the queen. They win, and return a heart. Now you go to the dummy with the Queen of clubs, cash your winning spade, and cash out. You have 9 tricks; no finesses, 100% play, it cannot lose.

At match points, making 9 tricks might turn out to be a bottom board. For example, if West had led a spade, no matter who had the king, declarer already has nine tricks, and he would play diamonds immediately. So, when they lead a heart, you might feel that you have to make the diamond play to catch up with the other declarers.

The East/West hands

K 10 7 3	9 8 5 2	West made a very fortunate lead, trying to set up his partner's suit instead of his own.
J 10 7	Q 9 8 6 4	
5 3 2	A Q	
9 7 4	8 6	