

IMAGINATION

Here are three hands from the Richmond paper. The first two are hands for which you have to use your imagination. The third is one in which you have the opportunity and the ability to tell your partner what to do, so that partner will not have to imagine or wish, but can make a play with certainty.

I have been reading the newspaper column hands for sixty years. In fact, the current column in the Time Dispatch is about the only thing that I look at, except the crossword puzzle. I get many of them, perhaps most of them, right. However the way that this first hand was played is so clever, I could not resist turning it into a lesson. I would never have been able to work out this play

A Q 6	You are in six no trump. East leads a diamond. You
A 10 5	count winners. Darn, you have the four top spades,
K 10	but only three winners. Not fair. You have four
Q J 6 3 2	diamonds, for a total of seven, plus the ace of clubs and
	the ace of hearts, for a total of 9. You need three more.
K J 3	If the clubs split reasonably well, you get three extra
Q J 9 7	tricks. Or if the heart finesse wins, and hearts are 3/3,
A Q J 6	you're home. You would like to try both, if you can. But
if	
A 7	if you start with a heart and it loses, now you need the
	club finesse. So you start with clubs. I would have started with the Ace
	and a small club from my hand, and imagine that West has a singleton or
	doubleton king, and has to play the king, setting up the dummy. But if the
	queen wins, you do not know what to do next. A very good West might
	have ducked with K 10 X X. Even worse, if you started with the finesse,
	queen from the dummy, and West wins, he will play a heart, and you will
	have to take the finesse prematurely, without testing to see if clubs split,

The actual declarer found a great play. At trick two he played a small club from his hand. If West went up, the clubs would come home, and the heart play would be unnecessary. And if East won the trick, he could not successfully attack hearts, and you would have had the time to test clubs. Very elegant. I would never have thought of this.

K Q 4 A K 6 2 9 4 A Q 5 4 A J 3 10 8 7 4 2 A K 7 3 2	This time you are in six hearts, and you are wondering how you got so high. Well, if the hearts split, and the king of clubs in on sides, you have 12 winners. They lead a diamond. You win, and play the ace and king of hearts. No luck; East has queen third. So you count your losers, and it keeps coming out three. Is there anything that you can do about it? Well, there is nothing that you can do about the heart loser. If the club finesse works, you are down to two losers, but it seem that there is no place to get rid of the third club.
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Use your imagination. Make a wish, and if the card fairy is kind, you can still make this contract. So you take the finesse, and it wins. Now what?

You imagined that West started with four or five clubs, and that East had only one or two. Now for the old strip and eliminate play. Cash the second diamond and the three spades. If East does not ruff in, you have him. Cash the ace of clubs, and play a heart. East wins and has to play a diamond or a spade, and you can pitch a club from your hand, and ruff in the dummy. Is this a likely distribution? Of course not, but it the only thing that can work; so, imagine it and try it.

The final hand presents a defensive situation. Here is your hand and the dummy.

K 6 5
K 5
6 3
A Q J 10 4 3

A J 2
10 7 6 4 3
J 7 5 2
5

They are in three no trump, and you lead the 4 of hearts, fourth best, Declarer plays the king and partner wins the ace and takes the two high hearts. Now he is imagining your hand, wishing that he can get back to you, knowing that declarer has enough tricks to make his game if he cannot put you in.

You have to tell him which suit to play. When partner plays the third heart, you hold all of the remaining hearts. In fact, if you signaled correctly, you led fourth best, the four, and then played the three to show that you had five of them. So your remaining cards are

10 7 6

When you want to tell your your partner what suit to play, and you are following suit, play the lowest outstanding card to to tell him to lead the lower suit, here diamonds, and the highest to ask for the spade shift. Here throw away the 10 of hearts. Partner will know that you wanted a spade.

Why, you might ask, is this a suit preference signal: Simply because it cannot be anything else. Partner knows how many you have, because you gave count at tricks one and two. It has to be telling you what suit to lead.

IF ANYONE IS INTERESTED, THERE ARE, OR WILL BE, TWO VIDEOS POSTED ON THE WEB SITE, AN INTERVIEW WITH DICKIE HAMILTON, RICHMOND'S SENIOR BRIDGE PLAYER, AND BRIDGE HISTORIAN. I LEARNED DURING THE INTERVIEW THAT THE FIRST BRIDGE COLUMN IN ANY DAILY PAPER WAS WRITTEN RIGHT HERE IN RICHMOND, AND WAS CREATED BY RICHARD PAYNE, ONE OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS OF THE BRIDGE CENTER, Dick was a local editor of the Richmond Times Dispatch. The column ran for several years, but eventually was picked up and syndicated by Alfred Sheinwold.

GOVIND filmed and edited the interview, and has posted it on YouTube. There should be instructions on the Web Site, detailing how to find it.

I AM ALWAYS willing to answer your bridge question, about bidding, about signals, about conventions, or anything else that interests you. You can reach me by email at maddhtr@hotmail.com.