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BRIDGE TODAY

Editor: Matthew Granovetter

The Magazine for People Who Love to Play Bridge

In this issue:

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Morphic Resonance and the Refusal to Ruff

by Barry Rigal

Ever since I wrote last month's article on the strategy of *not* ruffing or overruffing, and how effective that kind of defense can be, I have strangely come across hands where the strategy succeeds. I've gathered them all for this month's *Bridge Today*.

I'll start with a hand that popped up in Tuesday's duplicate at Honors Bridge Club in New York. I was South:

East dealer
None vul

North
♠ Q 8 4 2
♥ 5 3 2
♦ 5 3
♣ A K 9 4

West
♠ 5
♥ 7 6
♦ K Q 10 7 2
♣ 10 7 6 5 2

East
♠ K J 10 9 7 6
♥ Q 9 8
♦ 8
♣ Q J 8

South (Rigal)
♠ A 3
♥ A K J 10 4
♦ A J 9 6 4
♣ 3

West	North	East	South
—	—	2 ♠	double
pass	3 ♣	pass	3 ♥
pass	4 ♥	(all pass)	

Opening Lead: ♠5

I won the ♠A, cashed the ♥K, then two top clubs, discarding my spade loser. Next I led a diamond to the 8, 9 and 10 (I can do better, but this seemed normal). West returned a heart, ducked to my jack. This was the position:

♠ Q 8 4
♥ 5
♦ 5
♣ 9 4

♠ —
♥ —
♦ K Q 7 2
♣ 10 7 6

♠ K J 10 9 7
♥ Q
♦ —
♣ Q

♠ —
♥ K 10 4
♦ A J 6 4
♣ —

I led the ♦A, which East could not wait to ruff. She returned the ♣Q. I discarded a diamond. Then she led the ♠K, which I ruffed. Now I ruffed a diamond to dummy and cashed the ♠Q for 10 tricks.

Note that if East discards a spade on my ♦A, she sets the contract. If I ruff a diamond, she overruffs and exits with a club.

My next morphic resonance came when I was looking through some hands from an old set of Bulletins. This was one of my favorite hands from the Orlando 2004 Fall Nationals:

South dealer
E-W vul

North
♠ A 8 6 2
♥ A 7 6 5
♦ A Q
♣ A 7 5

West
♠ K 10 9 7 5
♥ Q 9 8
♦ K 10 7 5 2
♣ —

East
♠ —
♥ J 10 4 3
♦ 9 8 6 3
♣ K J 9 8 6

South (McLellan)
♠ Q J 4 3
♥ K 2
♦ J 4
♣ Q 10 4 3 2

South	West	North	East
pass	pass	1 ♣	pass
1 ♠	pass	3 ♠	pass
4 ♠	double	(all pass)	

Opening lead: ♥8

David McLellan heard the double of four spades, so he knew that he might run into some problems, especially in the trump suit.

West led the ♥8 to McLellan's king, and declarer crossed to the ♥A and ruffed a heart. He finessed the ♦Q, then cashed the ♦A before ruffing dummy's last heart with the ♠Q. It looked natural, but was fatal, for West to overruff with the king. West exited with a diamond for the ruff and discard, and South ruffed low in hand and pitched a club from dummy.

Now declarer advanced the ♠J to find the expected bad news. Having taken seven of the first eight tricks he led a club, and West correctly discarded rather than ruff a loser. McLellan won the ace in dummy and exited with a club to East's king. In the three-card ending, dummy had the ♠A-8-6 over West's 10-9-7. When East led a plain card, West ruffed with the 9 and dummy underruffed! West was endplayed — he had to lead a trump and give declarer the last two tricks for his contract.

Even after West's revealing double, the defense could still have prevailed if West pitches a diamond on the fourth heart instead of overruffing. West will subsequently be able to ruff a club and exit with the ♠K, ensuring his side three trump tricks and a club winner.

Morphic resonance is a term coined by Rupert Sheldrake for what he thinks is "the basis of memory in nature....the idea of mysterious telepathy-type interconnections between organisms and of collective memories within species."

In bridge, morphic resonance takes place when the same unique solution to problems appears in many places at the same time; for example, the idea of not overruffing.

Here's a deal I discovered just yesterday!

East dealer
E-W vul

North
♠ K 10 7 4
♥ K 9 5 4
♦ K 6 4
♣ A J

West
♠ Q 5 3 2
♥ 10 8
♦ A 8
♣ Q 6 5 4 3

East
♠ 8
♥ Q 7 6 3 2
♦ Q 10 9 7 5 2
♣ 7

South
♠ A J 9 6
♥ A J
♦ J 3
♣ K 10 9 8 2

West	North	East	South
—	—	pass	1 ♣
pass	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♦	pass	3 ♣
pass	4 ♠	(all pass)	

Opening lead: ♦A

The entire field from the 2005 Cavendish Pairs event made game on this hand, whether in notrump or spades, at all tables except one. This was the exception, and it featured a quick-witted defense by the Hoeyland brothers (Sam and Sven) of Norway, one of the Scandinavian pairs competing in this event.

After a natural auction, Sam, as West, led the ♦A and continued the suit. Declarer won dummy's king and decided to cash his plain suit winners before embarking on a crossruff.

In such situations it is fractionally superior to cash the winners in the shortest suit first, namely hearts, since that way there is less chance of a defender ruffing. But it is normal enough to play the ♣A and a second club. Sven, as East, did well to ruff the second club, and now played a top diamond. Declarer ruffed with the ♠J, and Sam found the key defensive move when he off-handedly discarded a heart instead of overruffing.

One of the tips that I learned early was that if you do not over-ruff with vulnerable trump honors, you are always likely to get the trick back with interest, and so it transpired here. South duly fell for the trap, when he played a trump to the king. But when East discarded the hand was over. Declarer could never get his second heart trick without drawing trumps, and if he did play on trumps, he would not have enough tricks. One down.

Refuseniks

In my bedtime reading last night, I came across still another exciting example of this genre. In the book Master Play, Terence Reese examines some unexpected ways in which the defenders can take advantage of declarer's shaky trump situation. One well-known maneuver is our morphic resonance theme, the refusal to over-ruff at a point when the defender has as many trumps as the declarer.

South dealer
N-S vul

North
♠ K 6 5
♥ A J 6
♦ 9 4 2
♣ A K 10 6

West
♠ Q J 10 7 3
♥ 4
♦ J 10 8 7
♣ J 7 5

East
♠ A 9 8 4 2
♥ 7 5 3 2
♦ —
♣ Q 9 8 3

South
♠ —
♥ K Q 10 9 8
♦ A K Q 6 5 3
♣ 4 2

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	pass	2 ♣	pass
2 ♦	pass	2 ♥	pass
4 ♦	pass	6 ♥	(all pass)

Opening lead: ♠Q

Playing in six hearts, (yes, six diamonds would have been easier) declarer ruffed the spade lead, led a trump to the jack and carefully led a low diamond towards his hand. East did not ruff, so the ♦A won. A second heart was led to the ace and another diamond was won in hand. Now came a club to the ace, a third diamond to the queen, then a low diamond ruffed by the ♥6. East refused to over-ruff and South could return to hand only by ruffing, which left him with one trump fewer than East, and down he went.

Notice, however, if South had entered dummy with a club twice, he would have retained control. If East does not ruff in on any of the diamonds, declarer can ruff the fourth diamond high and still has a trump in dummy to lead to his hand to allow him to complete drawing trump, and thus make 13 tricks instead of 11. Therefore, the best East can do is to ruff in and take his one trick.

So East must consider his play carefully — if declarer leads hearts twice to dummy, East must *not* ruff in, but if declarer leads clubs twice to dummy, East should ruff in (or else he'll lose a trick and look quite silly to boot!).

Incidentally, Reese suggests that most Easts would have done the right thing (after declarer led hearts twice to dummy), if they bothered to think about it, instead of over-ruffing "in their sleep." I'm not sure I share his confidence!

Wouldn't you know it. . . when I awoke this morning I came upon this one (no, it was not under my pillow):

South dealer
All vul

North
♠ 9 8
♥ A K 9 5 4 3
♦ A 7 4 2
♣ A

West
♠ 10 6 5 4
♥ Q 6
♦ J 9
♣ Q J 10 4 3

East
♠ 7 3
♥ J 10 7 2
♦ Q 10 6 5
♣ K 8 6

South
♠ A K Q J 2
♥ 8
♦ K 8 3
♣ 9 7 5 2

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	pass	2 ♥	pass
2 ♠	pass	3 ♦	pass
3 ♠	pass	6 ♠	(all pass)

South had a very awkward call at his third turn; maybe bidding three notrump would have been a possibility, but South fell in love with his 100 honors, and North decided slam had to be a fair gamble.

When West led the ♣Q declarer won in dummy perforce, came to hand with the ♦K and then ruffed a club. Next came the ♥A, then the king, on which South discarded a club. A low heart was ruffed in hand, and overruffed by West, whose return of a diamond left declarer stranded in dummy.

It appears that if declarer attacks hearts immediately, at trick two, he will succeed. Try it. He plays the ♥A, ♥K and a third heart, ruffing in hand with the ♠2. West overruffs and returns a diamond. Declarer wins in hand, ruffs a club, ruffs a heart with the ♠J and draws trump, discarding two diamonds from dummy. Making six! But West can foil this plan by discarding a diamond when declarer ruffs with the ♠2; now declarer has no way to bring the slam home.

OK, the slam can be made, but only by not ruffing out the hearts! Try the effect of ducking a heart completely at trick two, leaving the ace and king intact in dummy. On any return, declarer will be in control. He can ruff a club to dummy and then ruff a heart in hand. Then he draws trump.

So on this deal, the way to stop your opponent from not overruffing is not to ruff in the first place!

Good Trumps/Bad Trumps

by Pamela Granovetter

During the last 15 years or so, there's been a great deal of emphasis on bidding according to the *number* of trumps ("the law of total tricks"). Nobody can argue that it's a very nice thing indeed to have plenty of trumps when one is declaring a hand, but I was brought up on four-card majors and have played hundreds of successful 4-3 ("Moysian") fits throughout the years, so the length-in-trumps business never really impressed me beyond the normal common sense of it.

What *does* impress me about trumps is trump quality. My regular-partnership bidding systems always include "strong trump" and "weak trump" bids, an idea that I got from Ira Rubin. Knowing early in the auction that we're dealing with weak trumps allows us to avoid reaching shaky five-level contracts or no-play slams.

For example, here's a hand Matthew and I bid recently for an ACBL Bidding Contest:

Pamela	Matthew
♠ K Q J	♠ A 4 2
♥ Q 7 6 3	♥ K J 5 4
♦ A K	♦ Q J 2
♣ 10 6 3 2	♣ A J 8
—	1 NT
2 ♣	2 ♥
4 ♣	4 ♥
pass	

One notrump showed 15+ to 18, and 2♣ was regular Stayman. When Matthew showed hearts, I bid 4♣, a slam try with a balanced hand and weak trumps. He knew we were off at least one heart trick and since neither of us had a source of tricks (I showed a balanced hand), he signed off in game. Our methods allowed us to easily avoid the above-mentioned shaky five level or no-play slam.

Change my hand around a little bit to:

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

This time slam is on one of two finesses, 75%. I would bid 4♦ over his 2♥, showing a slam try with *good* trump, and he can comfortably go past game with a 4♠ cuebid, because he knows we have no trump losers, and he has both black suits controlled. My two ten-spots are just enough to bid the slam.

Another very easy way to use the "good trump/bad trump" idea is to bid aggressively with good trump and conservatively with bad trump. If you're looking at a good trump holding (remember, I'm talking about strong trump rather than long trump), and your partner is making slam noises, you can assume he has great controls outside of the trump suit, else what could he be bidding with?

Suppose you hold as responder:

♠ J 3
♥ 7 5 2
♦ J 7 5
♣ A K J 10 9

Partner opens 1♣ and you bid 3♣, limit raise:

Partner	You
1 ♣	3 ♣
4 ♦*	?

*splinter

What do you make of this? Do you beat a hasty retreat to 5♣, perhaps wishing you had responded only 2♣?

Think again. Partner just went past 3NT, your most likely game, and you *know* he did this with weak clubs! You should be thinking slam thoughts because partner must be control-rich in the majors to bid so much with poor trumps. Say partner has five major-suit tricks and a singleton:

♠ A K Q 2	♠ A K 4 2	♠ A 9 4
♥ A K 4	♥ A K Q	♥ A K Q J
♦ 3	♦ 3	♦ 3
♣ Q 5 4 3 2	♣ Q 5 4 3 2	♣ Q 5 4 3 2

He knows you have at most six cards in the majors. Not only is your hand a "moose" on this auction, but you actually have three jacks to spare!

Partner	You
1 ♣	3 ♣
4 ♦	6 ♣ (picture bid: good trumps, that's all)
pass	

Suppose you pick up in third chair:

♠ Q 8
♥ A K 8 6
♦ A K 5 2
♣ K 10 5

Partner	You
pass	1 ♦
1 ♠	2 NT
3 ♥	?

Your hand just got huge — look at those lovely hearts! True, partner is a passed hand but your cards are gold and you must let him know. Suppose you bid 4♣, cuebid in support of hearts (if you like spades, you begin by rebidding 3♠).

Partner had:

♠ A 10 9 6 2
♥ Q 10 5 2
♦ 9 4
♣ A 3

Looking at such strong black-suit controls, partner *knows* you have strong hearts and diamonds (else how could you possibly make a slam try opposite a passed hand?!) and Blackwoods himself to 6♥.

Now that you have the hang of it, try this one:

♠ A 3
♥ J 5 3 2
♦ A K Q 9 8 2
♣ 4

You	Partner
1 ♦	1 ♥
?	

Many folks would bid 4♦ with this hand, showing four hearts, six diamonds, and enough for a shot at game. Careful, careful.... What's partner supposed to do with this:

♠ K Q 9 2
♥ Q 7 6 4
♦ 4
♣ A K 3 2

Partner has a monstrous hand, but getting past 4♥ is a dangerous thing.

Look at your hand again:

♠ A 3
♥ J 5 3 2
♦ A K Q 9 8 2
♣ 4

Your hand is a dandy hand and you'd like to take a shot at game over the 1♥ response, but your poor heart support does not warrant a "picture bid" to 4♦. It's better to play that the jump to 4♦ shows "good red suits" so partner has some safety at the five-level. Therefore, I would bid only 3♥ with this hand, slightly worried about missing a game, but knowing my partner will bid game with any excuse, and certainly with good trumps.

In fact, I suggest a little gadget here so partner can find out about the trump problem even after the 3♥ bid:

---

1 ♦	1 ♥
3 ♥	3 ♠ = relay, what type of hand do you have?

3NT (step one) = singleton somewhere (4♣ asks for the singleton in two steps, but responder may bid 4♦ instead to ask opener to show the singleton only with good trumps)
4♣ (step two) = strong bal. hand, weak trumps
4♦ (step three) = strong bal. hand, good trumps
4♥ (step four) = 5-4-2-2 shape, good suits

On the example hand, opener bids 3NT, showing a singleton, and responder bids 4♦, saying he is worried about the trump quality. Now opener returns to 4♥.

When the trump suit is spades, 3NT is the relay bid and 4♣, 4♦, 4♥, and 4♠ are opener's four steps.

Let's try another....

Opener	Responder
♠ Q 7 6 2	♠ K 8 5 3
♥ J 10 3	♥ A K 7
♦ A K Q 8 7	♦ J 2
♣ A	♣ K J 7 6
1 ♦	1 ♠
3 ♠	3 NT
4 ♣	4 ♥
4 ♠	pass

Here 3NT was the relay to find out what kind of 3♠ bid that was. Opener, with step one (4♣) says he has a singleton. Responder could have asked where it was with a 4♦ bid, but instead bids 4♥ to ask about trumps. Opener bids 4♠ to say the trumps are bad. Another great stop!

My final example is this:

♠ A Q 10 6 4
♥ A K 6 5 3
♦ 9 2
♣ 7

You open 1♠ and partner responds 2♥, showing 10+ points, not a game force. This is a pleasant turn of events! I recommend a 4♣ splinter bid, despite the fact that you have minimum high-card points for your opening bid and a broken spade suit. You know that partner is looking at poor to mediocre trumps, and won't go anywhere without good side-suit controls. In fact, partner had:

♠ K J
♥ Q 8 7 4 2
♦ A 4 3
♣ 9 8 6

Despite a minimum in high cards, a poor suit, and a poor distribution, partner ekes out a 4♦ cuebid, because of the power of that spade holding and first-round diamond control, prepared to apologize if things go wrong, but comfortable because opener can't really go anywhere without excellent trumps. With the actual hand, opener Blackwoods into slam. However, the shaky five-level won't be reached opposite, say: ♠A Q 10 x x ♥ A x x x ♦ K Q x ♣ x. This is a beautiful hand, but the trumps are not strong. He rebids 4♥ over 4♦and you end up in a comfortable 4♥ contract.

In Conclusion

Some players don't like "I know that you know" or "he knows that I know" type of bidding, and I agree that it's not super-scientific. But it's easy, it's logical, and it works, especially where good trumps/bad trumps are involved. The bottom line is: Bid aggressively with strong trumps and conservatively with weak trumps.

Around the world with 52 cards

by Migry Zur Campanile

One of my fondest memories is of my first World title win in Ajaccio, on the beautiful island of Corsica, where the 1998 Generali World Masters took place.

Situated at the junction of the maritime lines leading from France to Italy and the East, and from Central Europe to Italy and Spain, Corsica is the third largest isle of the Western Mediterranean and its rich landscape attracts many tourists from all over the world. Its major city is Ajaccio whose main claim to fame lies in being the birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte. When Emile Zola visited the island more than a century ago, he described Ajaccio as "the memory of the great Corsican with some houses around."

The Generali World Masters has a very intense schedule and did not leave me as much time as I would have wished for sight-seeing. However, the morning after I arrived, I got up early and walked through the city, watching her

awake! I happened to wander into a fruit and vegetable market and bought pears that tasted of honey and sunlight. They became one of the tastes of Corsica for me which still lingers in my senses, together with the wild figs and blackberries that grow in the marquis, the Italian style espressos, served in suitably tiny cups and accompanied with oven warm baguettes and croissants, like some gastronomic translation of Corsican history, constantly buttressed between Italy and France.

I continued down to the waterfront along the winding, narrow streets, listening to the conversations of men sitting outside the cafés sipping their morning coffee. Women were busy working inside or sweeping the sidewalks in front of their shops. I was the only tourist walking down the street, but no one seemed to mind. When our glances happened to cross, residents would just smile and say "bonjour," and this made me feel like I stepped back in time to a different world set in its own traditional ways, where what we consider an old-fashioned lifestyle is an integral part of everyday life.

The tournament was an exciting roller-coaster of emotions: I was lying sixth before the last of three sessions with 53.7%, a full 6% behind Ruti Levit, who was then my long-time partner, and who had had two great sessions and was leading by two tops over the field. I felt that I had only borderline chances of a podium but as soon as I started, everything seemed to fall into place and I was into the fabled "heat one" state players often dream about, when I could not pull a card wrong. The result was a 64% score, a nice achievement given the quality of the field, which included most of the top women players from Sabine Auken to Jill Meyers and many more.

The Men's competition was won by Paul Chemla. One of the most interesting hands of the event, however, saw as a protagonist an up and coming player from Norway who had quickly made a name for himself: Geir Helgemo.

After gaining a European and a World title in the juniors, Geir was already representing his country at the tender age of 21 in the 1991 European Open Teams Championships. He went on from strength to strength and gathered an impressive record, including a silver and a bronze in the Bermuda Bowl, several US National titles and many wins in prestigious invitational events like the Cap Gemini, the Macallan and the Politiken Pairs.

In the third set of the Generali Masters he was the only one to find the accurate defense on this complex deal:

Board 6
East dealer
E-W vul

North
♠ J 6
♥ A J 10 8 3
♦ Q 6 2
♣ K J 8

East (you)
♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ K 9 6 2
♦ K 9 7
♣ A

West	North	East	South
Kholomeev	*Chemla*	*Helgemo*	*Perron*
—	—	1 ♠	2 ♦
pass	2 ♥	pass	3 ♦
3 ♠	4 ♦	(all pass)	

At most tables North-South competed all the way to 4♦ and the defense started off with a predictable spade lead. Declarer would then take the ♠A and play back a spade. How do you plan the defense?

If you found the crucial switch of the ♥K, like most Easts in the event, then you should be proud of yourself. What do you think happened next? Here was the full deal:

North
♠ J 6
♥ A J 10 8 3
♦ Q 6 2
♣ K J 8

West
♠ 5 4 3 2
♥ Q 5
♦ J
♣ 10 9 7 5 3 2

East
♠ K Q 10 8 7
♥ K 9 6 2
♦ K 9 7
♣ A

South
♠ A 9
♥ 7 4
♦ A 10 8 5 4 3
♣ Q 6 4

Usually the players in the South seat won with dummy's ♥A, played the ♦Q to the ♦K, and ♦A, squashing West's singleton ♦J, and then tried to get back to dummy with a club in order to finesse the ♦9. Bad luck: East took the ♣A and after a heart to the ♥Q, got a club ruff to defeat the contract.

Ajaccio

Note that it does no good for declarer to duck the ♥K when it is played. East can cash the ♣A and play a second heart. Declarer wins and plays trumps leading the ♦Q. However, he cannot get back to dummy.

Is the contract doomed after the ♥K switch?

Not at all. A few declarers demonstrated how by playing a heart immediately after taking the ♦A. West had to win with the ♥Q and play a club to the singleton ♣A of East, who is now end-played into giving declarer an entry to dummy to take the diamond finesse.

Can you see how the defense can prevail against the best that declarer can do?

Well, Helgemo did!

After taking the second spade, the Norwegian realized how declarer could parry an immediate ♥K switch. He first cashed the ♣A and only after that he played the ♥K. Perron in South took with the ♥A and played trumps starting with the ♦Q from dummy. But when he tried to go back to dummy with a club to finesse the ♦9, Helgemo ruffed and then put his partner in with the ♥Q to receive a second ruff, sending the contract two down!

Ganging Up on Declarer

by Matthew Granovetter

Just as there are certain conventions and strategies in bidding, there are techniques in declarer play and defense. In declarer play, we all know about ruffing losers, pulling trump, establishing the long suit, etc. But on defense, the strategies are not always well defined.

A few are common: tapping declarer, obtaining a ruff or overruff, holding up the trump ace until you hold A-x. More rare but a lot of fun are these: Giving a ruff-sluff to force declarer, squeezing declarer, and, my favorite: forcing declarer to play out of one hand.

This last idea is most likely to arise when dummy has two long, strong suits, and the hand is a misfit for declarer, who holds the other two suits. For example, look at this deal, first from declarer's viewpoint to really appreciate the agony. . . .

North
♠ A K 6 5 2
♥ Q J 7 6 2
♦ Q 2
♣ 8

♣ Q

South (you)
♠ J 3
♥ K
♦ K J 10 9 8
♣ A K 7 6 4

South	North
1 ♦	1 ♠
2 ♣	3 ♥
3 NT	pass

Opening lead: ♣Q

There are 27 HCP here, but try to make 3NT. You win the lead and play the ♦8 to the queen. It holds. You continue diamonds. East wins the ace and leads a low spade. You try the jack, but it's covered. OK, you win in dummy and try to sneak through a heart to your king, but East pops up with the ♥A and plays another spade! Darn it! You win in dummy and cash two hearts but West shows out. So you try a top spade and a spade, but East wins, cashes his fourth spade, and then starts cashing heart tricks — two more in fact. When he cashes his last heart (having started with five of them), it is trick 12 and you must discard a high club or high diamond. You don't even know which card he has left at trick 13. And you are already down two tricks! If you guess wrong you will be down three!

How did this happen to you? You, a nice guy, too! It happened because your opponent spotted your achilles heel: your misfit. He stripped one hand (dummy) and forced you to play out of it. Let's look at the whole diagram:

North
♠ A K 6 5 2
♥ Q J 7 6 2
♦ Q 2
♣ 8

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

East
♠ 10 9 7 4
♥ A 10 9 8 3
♦ A 4
♣ 5 3

South
♠ J 3
♥ K
♦ K J 10 9 8
♣ A K 7 6 4

To review the hand, you received the ♣Q lead. You led a diamond to the queen and East had some inspiration. He spotted the 5-5 in dummy and the auction was revealing as well. He decided to duck and win the next round, thereby stripping the dummy. Then he attacked the dummy by leading a spade. The ♠J was covered by the queen. Declarer tried a heart off dummy. East rose with the ace, catching the ♥K singleton, and led another spade. Declarer didn't know which major suit to try to set up. He didn't want to be in dummy anymore! He tried for hearts 4-3, but they weren't and then he cashed his high spade trick and got out, but that didn't work either. In the end he tried desperately to remember if West had given count in diamonds back at trick two. He threw the club and went three down.

Agony for declarer, but fun, what fun for the defenders! Sometimes they can gang up on declarer. It's really sad for him.

North
♠ Q J 9 8 7
♥ 3
♦ A K Q 4 3
♣ J 8

West
♠ A K 3
♥ 9 8 7 6
♦ J 10 8 2
♣ K 3

East
♠ 6 5 4
♥ 5 4 2
♦ 9 6 5
♣ A 10 9 2

South
♠ 10 2
♥ A K Q J 10
♦ 7
♣ Q 7 6 5 4

North	South
1 ♠	2 ♥
3 ♦	3 NT
pass	

Opening lead: ♦J

Declarer won the lead in dummy and tried a spade to West's king. West did not know what to lead next, but he spotted the genre and shifted to a heart, hoping it would begin a strip on dummy. Declarer won and cashed the rest of them, throwing two diamonds and two spades. Then declarer led his ♠10. West won and both defenders plus the kibitzers at the other tables and even the dishwasher in the kitchen knew that the defenders must not let declarer reach dummy anymore. West shifted to the ♣K and a club, hoping for the best. East won the ♣A and continued clubs. Sure enough, South had to win the ♣Q on the third round and lose a club to East — five tricks to the defense, down one. Notice that East had to follow with the ♣2 on the ♣K, despite wanting a club continuation. He needed to preserve his 10-9. Even playing standard signals, East must play the 2. This was not a hand for signals. Both defenders knew what they were doing: ganging up on declarer, stripping one hand and playing only with the other.

Now that you have the idea, try this little quiz:

#1

Board 12
West dealer
N-S vul

North
♠ K 8 5
♥ 10 3
♦ Q 8
♣ K Q J 9 8 5

West (you)
♠ A 7 2
♥ Q 4 2
♦ A K 9 5
♣ 7 6 3

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

You lead the ♦K. It goes 8, 4, 7. How would you continue?

#2

North
♠ 10 7 4
♥ A
♦ Q 9 8 7 5
♣ A 6 5 4

East (you)
♠ J 5 3 2
♥ 10 6 5
♦ A 4 3
♣ 10 7 2

♣ Q

West	North	East	South
—	pass	pass	1 ♥
pass	2 ♦	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

Your partner leads the ♣Q, which wins, followed by the ♣J, won by South's king. Declarer plays the ♦K at trick three. Partner follows with the 2. What is your plan?

#3

West dealer
Both vul

North
♠ A K Q 10 9 4
♥ 9 5
♦ J 5
♣ K Q 3

East (you)
♠ J 3
♥ A J 6
♦ K Q 10 7 6
♣ A 9 5

♦ 2

West	North	East	South
pass	1 ♠	2 ♦	double
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♥
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♦2 (fourth best)

Declarer plays low from dummy and wins the ace. Then he plays three top spades. Partner shows a tripleton and declarer has a doubleton. You ruff the third spade to prevent declarer from discarding a diamond, and South overruffs. Next a diamond is led to the jack and your queen. What do you do now?

Sometimes our genre is easy to spot, but sometimes you have to use imagination. In addition, a signal can often wake you up to it. Look at this deal, from our quiz, played in a set game on the Internet last month. I was West, partnered by Rick Benstock, of Buffalo.

Board 12
West dealer
N-S vul

North
♠ K 8 5
♥ 10 3
♦ Q 8
♣ K Q J 9 8 5

West (Matt)
♠ A 7 2
♥ Q 4 2
♦ A K 9 5
♣ 7 6 3

East (Rick)
♠ Q 9 6 3
♥ 9 8 6 5
♦ 4 3
♣ 10 4 2

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

Matt		*Rick*	
West	North	East	South
1 ♦	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	3 ♣	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

I led the ♦K. It went 8, 4, 7. How would you continue?

That 4 looked high to me. I took it to mean that partner did not want a switch to the obvious shift suit: hearts. But with only three spades to the ace, what good could a spade shift do? I thought. I then woke up. What if declarer held a singleton ace of clubs? This was the "strip one hand" genre! I shifted to a low spade. South ducked. Rick won the queen and returned a spade to my ace. I cashed the ♦A and led a spade. Dummy was finished and I had to score the ♥Q for the setting trick. What fun!

On the following hand from a rubber bridge game, a similar strategy occurred, with a slight twist. Sandy Trent was East.

North
♠ 10 7 4
♥ A
♦ Q 9 8 7 5
♣ A 6 5 4

West
♠ 9 6
♥ Q J 9 3
♦ J 6 2
♣ Q J 9 8

East (Sandy)
♠ J 5 3 2
♥ 10 6 5
♦ A 4 3
♣ 10 7 2

South
♠ A K Q 8
♥ K 8 7 4 2
♦ K 10
♣ K 3

West	North	East	South
—	pass	pass	1 ♥
pass	2 ♦	pass	3 NT
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♣Q

After allowing the ♣Q to hold, declarer won the second round of clubs and led the ♦K. To defeat 3NT, Sandy had to win the ♦A immediately and return a heart! The heart return kills the dummy, but the ♦A play is also necessary to block the suit. If East plays low on the diamond, South can finesse through the jack to establish a second diamond trick. When East takes the first diamond trick, the diamond suit becomes like the club suit on the previous hand: a singleton honor facing a lot of tricks *that cannot be reached*.

Yes, declarer made a slight error and paid dearly. He should have won the first club lead with the king and attacked diamonds, while he still had two entries to dummy.

The third problem comes from a duplicate game at my local Cincinnati club. I was South and my RHO sat down and told me she was interested in attending my next seminar at the club, "if it's going to be on difficult defense, where I need help." Well, this hand now appeared:

West dealer
Both vul

North (Potter)
♠ A K Q 10 9 4
♥ 9 5
♦ J 5
♣ K Q 3

West
♠ 7 6 5
♥ Q 7
♦ 9 8 3 2
♣ J 8 4 2

East
♠ J 3
♥ A J 6
♦ K Q 10 7 6
♣ A 9 5

South (Matt)
♠ 8 2
♥ K 10 8 4 3 2
♦ A 4
♣ 10 7 6

West	North	East	South
pass	1 ♠	2 ♦	double
pass	3 ♠	pass	4 ♥
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♦9

When I presented the problem to you in the quiz, I had West lead the ♦2, which I think is better, because East doesn't get confused about the diamond length.

I was playing with Potter Orr, who runs the Cincinnati Bridge Club website (cincybridge.com). I would have jumped to 3♥ over 2♦ if I had been sure it was a weak jump in competition. We seemed to have landed in a hopeless contract, but I spotted a chance.

I played the 5 from dummy, won in hand and played three top spades. East ruffed with the ♥6 and I overruffed with the 8. Then I exited with a diamond to the jack and queen. At this point, East played ♥A and ♥J, and I claimed 10 tricks, leading a club to dummy.

East can defeat me if she switches to a low club. I must put up the 10, hoping she started with the jack. But West covers and now my entry to dummy is killed. I can lead a heart to the king and a heart, but East exits with a diamond and waits for me to play clubs. Down one.

This low club play is part of our genre, wherein the dummy is destroyed by taking off its entry before dummy's winners can be cashed. Nice, huh?

Now, for a change of pace, try this declarer play problem. . . .

East dealer
None vul

North
♠ J 6 4 2
♥ A 8
♦ K 10 6 2
♣ 9 3 2

♠ 3

South (you)
♠ 5
♥ K J 10 9 7 4 2
♦ A
♣ A J 7 5

West	North	East	South
—	—	1 ♠	4 ♥
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♠3

East wins the ♠K and plays the ♠A, as West follows up the line. You ruff the second spade. How do you play it?

Solution to Declarer Play Problem

I'd like to show you a hand I came across where the late champion Rixi Markus, of England, did a similar thing as declarer that I'm discussing for the defense. But she did it to her own dummy and that was the only way to make the contract!

East dealer
None vul

North
♠ J 6 4 2
♥ A 8
♦ K 10 6 2
♣ 9 3 2

West
♠ Q 8 3
♥ Q 6 5
♦ J 8 7 3
♣ 10 6 4

East
♠ A K 10 9 7
♥ 3
♦ Q 9 5 4
♣ K Q 8

South (Rixi)
♠ 5
♥ K J 10 9 7 4 2
♦ A
♣ A J 7 5

West	North	East	South
—	—	1 ♠	4 ♥
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♠3

East won the opening lead with the ♠K and wasn't sure what to lead at trick two. The ♣K might help declarer set up clubs, if South held a side club suit; a diamond looked wrong from the queen, and a trump would kill any honor partner might have there. The safest lead was a low spade, since partner had led the 3 and was known to hold either a void or three to the queen. But East played the ♠A instead, and this was all the help Rixi needed.

She ruffed, led a trump to the ace and ruffed another spade, bringing down the queen. (Notice that she didn't rush to unblock the diamonds for a discard on the ♦K.) Once the ♠J was set up, she cashed the ♦A and ♥K, then put West on play with a heart to the queen. Now there were two tricks in dummy (the ♠J and ♦K), so West was forced to keep dummy off play! He had to lead a club to East's ♣Q and Rixi ducked. East now had to lead another club and Rixi finessed, taking the rest of the tricks.

Isn't it interesting that declarer secured two tricks in dummy that she never used, except to block the defenders from leading those suits? Amazing. Have a nice April.

Kantar's Korner

by Eddie Kantar

April Fools? — Not Really! Truth is Stranger Than Fiction

Here's a new mandatory falsecard you may not have thought of:

North
♣ K Q 3 2

West
♣ J 10 8 7

East
♣ A

South
♣ 9 6 5 4

South is playing notrump, with the lead in the South hand. South has multiple hand entries and needs but two club tricks. The safety play is to lead low and then play low from the dummy to guard against the stiff ace with East. However, if West plays the 10 or jack the first time the suit is led, South must take another think. If this is a true card (singleton), declarer must cover with the queen or king to ensure two tricks, since the layout is:

North
♣ K Q 3 2

West
♣ J

East
♣ A 10 8 7

South
♣ 9 6 5 4

* * * * *

I hate to be a name dropper, but the following hand took place last summer in a rubber game at the pool of the Hilton Guayaquil in Ecuador. I was West, Yvonne, my ever loving, was East, and Naren Gupta, from Woodside, California, was declaring, facing his wife, Vinita, sitting North.

Social Bridge
South dealer
Both sides drinking piña coladas
(mine the only one without rum!)

North (Vinita)
♠ K Q 10
♥ J 10 7 6 5
♦ Q 6 4
♣ K 2

West (moi)
♠ J 9 5 3
♥ 2
♦ A 8 5 3
♣ J 9 4 3

East (Yvonne)
♠ A 7
♥ A 8 4 3
♦ 10 7 2
♣ 8 7 6 5

South (Naren)
♠ 8 6 4 2
♥ K Q 9
♦ K J 9
♣ A Q 10

South	West	North	East
1 NT	pass	2 ♦	pass
2 ♥	pass	3 NT	pass
4 ♥*	(all pass)		

*after some thought

Opening lead: ♠3

The reason I elected to lead a low spade rather than a club was that my spades were so much stronger. Yvonne captured the king with her ace and returned a spade into the Q-10. At this point, who do you like? Do you think we can defeat 4♥ if we keep our wits about us, or do you think South can make 4♥ no matter what we do?

North
♠ Q
♥ J 10 7 6 5
♦ Q 6 4
♣ K 2

West (moi)
♠ J 9
♥ 2
♦ A 8 5 3
♣ J 9 4 3

East (Yvonne)
♠ —
♥ A 8 4 3
♦ 10 7 2
♣ 8 7 6 5

South
♠ 8 6
♥ K Q 9
♦ K J 9
♣ A Q 10

Solution

From here it looks like we should prevail. To avoid a spade ruff, declarer must start with three rounds of clubs, discarding a spade from the table.

At this point declarer has to either knock-out the ♥A or the ♦A. Let's say he starts with hearts. If East ducks two hearts, South dare not play a third. If he does, East wins and plays a club, forcing dummy. If declarer draws the last trump, turning this into a notrump hand, when I win the ♦A, I have two winning spades.

Instead of playing a third trump, say declarer leads the ♦K. I can win and play a spade, dummy ruffs high, partner discarding a diamond, and declarer cannot cash two more diamonds without East ruffing. If a heart is led, East wins and plays a club, driving out dummy's last trump; East's fourth trump is the setting trick.

If South attacks diamonds before hearts, I can win the first (or second diamond) and play a spade, forcing dummy to ruff high as partner discards a diamond. Declarer can't cash two diamonds and if trumps are started, East wins the third trump and plays a club, once again driving out dummy's last trump while East remains with a trump. I see no way for South to make this contract against decent defense.

Notice, please, that the spade lead and spade return were necessary to defeat this game. I attribute my defense to the ♠5, but Yvonne made the killing return, despite the piña colada.

RKB Korner

Pete Kichline, a friend of mine and author of Bridging the Gap, sent me the following remarkable tales of RKB.

Dear Eddie,

Having impressed upon my students the advantage of 1430 RKCB — the space-saver 5♣ answer, since one keycard is the most frequent response, leaving room for 5♦ to be the queen-ask when *either* major has been agreed upon — it has led to two amazing discoveries this past week. *Twice* this past week I have asked my partner (via 5♦) if she owned the trump queen — although *both* times I was looking at it in *my* hand. But I just wanted them to practice — getting used to it, so to speak. Well, "a funny thing happened on the way to the forum...."

On the first hand (a 1♠ opener by partner and a 2NT Jacoby response by me holding K-Q-x-x of spades), I subsequently asked partner for the trump queen after her 5♣ answer to 4NT. She remembered that holding an extra trump (10+ total pieces) she was supposed to "pretend" that she had it. And, holding six spades, her answer was yes (she held ♠A-J-x-x-x-x). Armed with this valu-

able knowledge of her extra length, I could actually count 13 tricks and comfortably bid the grand in notrump. Without knowing about that extra spade, I would have settled for six. You may debate whether partner could have corrected to seven had I not gone through this nonsense (assuming I bid 5NT), but this sure made things a hell of a lot easier.

The second hand is even more remarkable. After responding 1♠, holding A-Q-x-x-x, to partner's 1♦ opener, and hearing partner raise, I again went through my Blackwood routine. I asked again for the trump queen. This time, holding K-10-x-x, she correctly said no. I ended up in 6♠ missing an ace. After pulling all of the trumps in two rounds, I was faced with having to guess x-x vs. K-J of a side suit. When I led from dummy toward my K-J, RHO flew up with his ace, taking me off the guess. "Why duck the setting trick" was his postmortem response. Because of my queen question, both defenders believed that their partner had the trump queen!

You can argue that smart defenders should realize that off an ace *and* the trump queen I would not have bid the slam, but don't be a party pooper. I planted a seed in the opponent's mind and reaped a benefit.

The subject of asking for the trump queen when you are staring at it is something that has never been addressed in print. I find this interesting and imaginative. I just gave you two valuable reasons for asking despite knowing the queen's location. Do you think that the ACBL would classify my queen question as a psyche? Food for thought, anyway. What do you think? I value your opinion. Sincerely, *Pete Kichline*

Dear Pete,

What can I say? We've (you've) created a monster! But one point: If you try one of these "don't ask/don't tell" queen-asks, be advised, unless you have a partnership agreement to the contrary, a follow-up bid of 5NT is a grand slam try and promises joint possession of the five keycards plus the trump queen. Responder is allowed to jump to a grand. So, please, no 5NT bids missing a keycard!

* * * * *

Pete teaches bridge in the Miami area and sent me some stories from his classes. I'd like to share them with you.

Dear Eddie,

These are all true stories — "you had to be there" to truly appreciate them. Some subtleties do get lost in the translation, but you and your readers have a good imagination. . . .

1) Just today, sitting E-W, I arrive at a table on the last round where the cards were running in the N-S direction. Just before game time, this particular North player taught South 1430 RKCB. Quoting me, North said, "Five clubs is the *most* frequent answer in 1430, thus the advantage of five diamonds being available for the queen-ask." Sure enough, North Blackwooded (for the fourth time in the session), and his partner answered 5♣. When the South dummy later appeared it had two keycards! North's comment was: "That's the fourth time today that five clubs was your answer to my four-notrump question. Now you have two, once you had three, and the other times you had one." To which South replied: "Pete was right — five clubs is the most frequent answer. But one *through* four covers a lot of territory, so neither of us should be surprised." (!)

2) Playing with a client who had an "attitude," we started at E-W #1 in a local game that was not using ACBL decks of cards. An hour later at table #5, my partner calls the director in the middle of the auction. Upon his arrival, my partner informed him adamantly that we had already played this deal. The director checked the boards, looked at me for guidance, and tried to reassure my partner that her contention was false and that we were playing this hand for the first time. My partner remained stubborn despite my agreement with the director. "How can you be so sure?" the director asks my partner. "I distinctly remember the *flowers* on the backs of Pete's cards from table #2" (!) The conception of a second deck of cards with the same floral design never entered her mind.

3) This is one of my favorites. Maria is a student of mine — lots of potential, but very inexperienced. She is a "classy" middle-aged woman from Colombia, a world traveler many times over, who probably carries around five different money currencies in her purse on a daily basis (Francs, Pesos, Kronor, Euros, dollars, etc.). She finds the courage to enter her *first* tournament and . . . reaches the final of a Flight "C" knockout. But then this auction came along:

(My heroine, Maria)

West	North	East	South
—	—	1 ♥	double
redouble	2 ♦	pass	pass
3 ♣	pass	4 ♣	4 ♦
pass*	pass	pass (!)	

*forcing

As East was contemplating her opening lead, "my" Maria talked across the table. "I thought my pass was forcing. In last week's class, Pete said that when the hand 'belonged' to us, we had to outbid them or double them."

South screamed for the director and he was told of the inappropriate conversation between E-W. Maria profusely apologized and explained that she was "very green" (a Colombian's term for inexperienced), but saw no harm as the auction was over. The director replied: "You can't be 'that green' if you are discussing a 'forcing pass' auction. I'm going to fine you 3 imps!"

Maria shrugged her shoulders, reached for her purse, and asked what the conversion scale was from "imps" to American dollars! As everyone laughed, Maria asked: "What are imps?" Hearing that, the director rescinded his ruling, saying, "Maybe you are as 'green' as you claim to be."

4) I'll close with an "Yvonne" story, although in this case, it's my wife, Barbara. Last September, on the last round at the local duplicate, Barbara opens 1NT. There's a 2♠ overcall by my RHO. All vul, I decided not to double and bid 3NT with my 3 little spades and 10 count. I just taught Barbara about lebensohl, where "direct denies." No alert. Got a spade lead, but a happy ending as she took the first 10 tricks with her spade stopper. Plus 630. But I couldn't help noticing the *anemic* 2♠ overcall — Q-x-x-x-x of spades and about an 8-count!

In the car on the way home, I asked Barbara if she had noticed her LHO's "hand" that overcalled 2♠ on the last round. "Yes, I did! And as a matter of fact, I'm glad that you mentioned it, because I wanted to talk about it." (Here comes a lebensohl review, I thought .... boy, was I wrong.) "I did indeed see her 'hand,' and that was the *most* beautiful opal ring that I have ever seen!" She

continued: "That's *my* birthstone, and next month is my birthday, so if you need an idea for .... "

Dear Pete,

I read this birthstone story to Yvonne, telling her that Pete had mentioned her name in the story. After she heard the story Yvonne said: "That's my birthstone too, and it was a good idea." Thanks, Pete.

* * * * *

It's hard to top those stories, but here are two recent ones from my classes. . . Two of these moments came when I was discussing third-hand play.

In one example, West leads low against notrump, dummy has x-x and East has Q-10-x. After having explained third-hand high, I asked the class whether they would play the 10 or the queen. One lady answered she would play the jack! In another example, this was the position:

North
♠ 10 3 2

West
♠ Q 6 5 4

N
W E
S

East plays the ♠8
?

South plays the ♠A
?

In this exercise I tell them they are West, having led a low spade. After much preliminary explanation West is supposed to be able to place *all* of the remaining cards just from seeing partner's 8. Can you?

The answer is that East has the J-9-8 and South the A-K-7. I had told them about two zillion times that East can't have the card directly beneath the one East has played.

With this in mind, I asked one lady who was sitting West: "Who has the seven of spades?" She answered: "I don't do sevens, I only go down as far as nines."

This last one was an example of inferences, which I talk about often.

North
♠ Q J 10 x x x

West
♠ K x

N
W E
S

East
♠ ?

South leads a low spade
?

South has opened 1NT and then super-accepted partner's spade transfer, showing four spades. South wins the opening lead and leads a low spade. Of course, everybody in the West seat jumps up with the king, and, of course, partner has the singleton ace.

The idea is to ask yourself if South had the missing honor (the ♠A), would the play have gone this way. Of course, it wouldn't. South would be taking the finesse or, at the very least, be making the inferior play of the ♠A. After going over this several times I ask the class if this should come up again, which card would they play. They all say the king! (Who believes the teacher, anyway?) Finally one lady said: "O.K., I'll play low. I really wouldn't, but I know you would, because you're so tricky!" *Ciao.*

Card Play in Depth

by Anders Wirgren, Limhamn, Sweden

The second gathering for the Swedish championship for club teams had an exceptionally large number of interesting deals. I'd like to share three of them with you.

Today it's very popular in Sweden to play weak, two-suited opening bids. Sometimes they push the opponents around, making it difficult for them to reach their best contract. On the other hand, sometimes it gets them into the auction when they shouldn't be, and declarer has a road map how to make his contract. Here is such a deal:

East dealer
Both vul

North (Johan)
♠ A 9
♥ 3
♦ A Q J 9 3 2
♣ A Q 5 3

West
♠ Q 10 8 6 3
♥ A K 7 6 4
♦ —
♣ 9 8 4

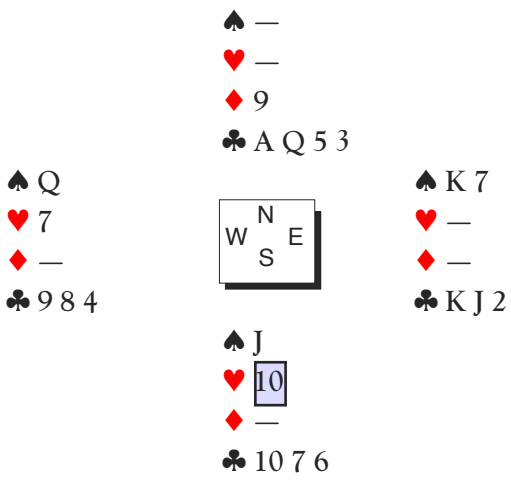
East
♠ K 7 5 2
♥ 9 5 2
♦ 10 8 7
♣ K J 2

South (Anders)
♠ J 4
♥ Q J 10 8
♦ K 6 5 4
♣ 10 7 6

After two passes, West opened with 2♥, showing at least 4-4 in the majors and 6-10 HCP. My partner, Johan Bennett, North, doubled, East took a spade preference, and in due time I became declarer in 5♦.

A spade lead would have beaten me before I got started, but West couldn't resist the temptation to lead the ♥A, and East discouraging with the 9 (upside-down). A club shift would beat me, but West shifted to a spade, and that was that. Plus 600.

OK, it wasn't that easy, so let's see how the play went. I won the ♠A, cashed the ♦A-Q and led the ♦J to my king. The ♥Q was covered and ruffed, a low diamond led to my hand, and two heart winners were cashed, dummy discarding a spade and a club. But what should poor East do on the last heart?



West follows to the ♥10, and dummy pitches a club. If East parts with the ♠K (to avoid being endplayed), I ruff my last spade and lead a club towards my ten for an endplay. And since the bidding has placed the ♣K with East, this line is easy to find.

In practice, East threw a club, and I could establish the game-going trick in that suit.

Now imagine what would have happened had West opened with a mundane, light, but natural 1♠ in third seat, as my teammate did. Was it so surprising that North-South ended up in 3NT and went down three when the ♣K was offside? And if they end up in 5♦, and the defense fails to find the killing club shift, isn't it likely that declarer hopes that the opening bidder has the ♣K?

If you care for opening light in third hand, by all means do it, but don't do it with a bid that reveals your distribution. Even if a higher opening bid takes away more bidding space, the less informational character about your hand will give the opponents more trouble. Quite often a low bid is more pre-emptive than a higher one. The world hasn't realized this, but as a valued reader of *Bridge Today* you surely have!

Now try this defensive problem:

North dealer
E-W vul

North
♠ K 8
♥ A K Q 8 6 5
♦ Q 8 5
♣ 6 3

♦ J

East (you)
♠ J 3
♥ 10 9 7 4
♦ A 10 6 3
♣ J 5 2

West	North	East	South
—	1 ♥	pass	1 ♠
pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♠
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♦J

North-South play a strong club system, and North's jump to 3♥ showed a maximum opener (14-15 HCP) with six hearts plus two or three spades.

Partner tables the ♦J and dummy plays low. Over to you!

It's easy to be seduced by a ten-spot, isn't it? And at least two experts played low without thinking. That wasn't the winning defense, the full deal being:

♠ K 8
♥ A K Q 8 6 5
♦ Q 8 5
♣ 6 3

♠ Q 9 7
♥ J 3 2
♦ J 9
♣ A Q 9 7 4

♠ J 3
♥ 10 9 7 4
♦ A 10 6 3
♣ J 5 2

♠ A 10 6 5 4 2
♥ —
♦ K 7 4 2
♣ K 10 8

Declarer won the ♦K, cashed ace and king of trumps, threw three clubs on high hearts, ruffed a club and led a diamond to the 9, queen and ace. In due time he earned himself a beer by winning the last trick with the ♦7.

Since East's third diamond was the 6, not the 7, he knew it couldn't be right to duck the first trick. South, who jumped to 4♠, has six spades; and the opening lead has told East that West has led from shortness. Since South has at most three cards in the rounded suits, all club losers will disappear if you duck the first trick. So the right defense (easier on paper than at the table, I have to admit) is to go up ace and shift to clubs, hoping partner will take three tricks in the black suits.

Besides, you can be pretty sure that West's clubs are headed by ace-queen. Why? Because he would have led that suit from most other combinations, rather than a diamond from jack doubleton, wouldn't he!

The last hand is a difficult one, with various squeeze possibilities. I was North.

East dealer
None vul

North (Anders)
♠ Q 10 9
♥ K 9 8 2
♦ A K Q 6
♣ 7 5

West
♠ A K 3
♥ Q J 7 6 3
♦ 3
♣ Q J 4 3

East
♠ 7 2
♥ 10 5
♦ J 8 7 5 2
♣ K 9 8 6

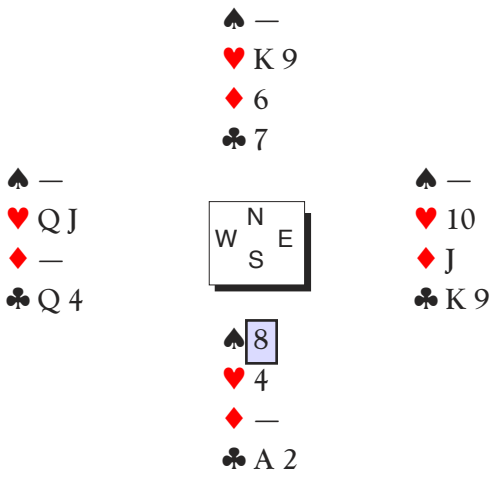
South (Johan)
♠ J 8 6 5 4
♥ A 4
♦ 10 9 4
♣ A 10 2

West	North	East	South
—	—	pass	pass
1 ♥	pass	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
pass	2 NT	pass	3 NT
pass	4 ♠	(all pass)	

My 2♥ bid was two-way: either a gentle raise to 2♠ or a hand worth a second bid. Had I bid 2♠ instead, it would have been invitational. I considered my hand too strong for 2♠ and bid 2♥ followed by 2NT, natural and non-forcing. But when my partner, Johan, raised notrump, my two little clubs made me shy away from my favorite contract.*

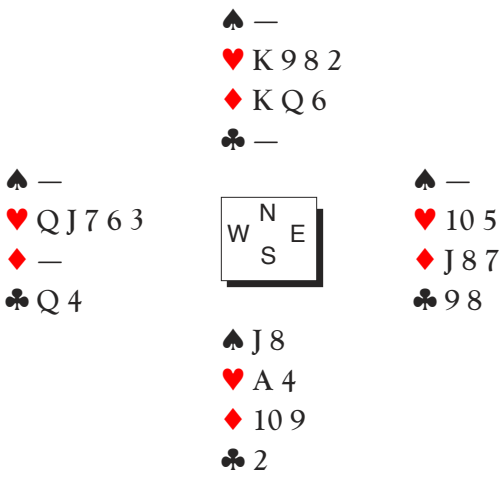
*A simple 4♠ over 1♠ is possible. I think most players would pass 2NT with the South hand, so Johan did remarkably well to raise. — *editor*

West led his singleton diamond, won in dummy. At first, it looks like the contract can be made on a double squeeze. If South leads a club to the ten and jack, West has to play three rounds of trumps to stop the club ruff in dummy, but then Johan cashes dummy's diamond honors, returns to his hand in hearts and cashes his high trumps. When the last trump is played, there is a non-simultaneous double squeeze:



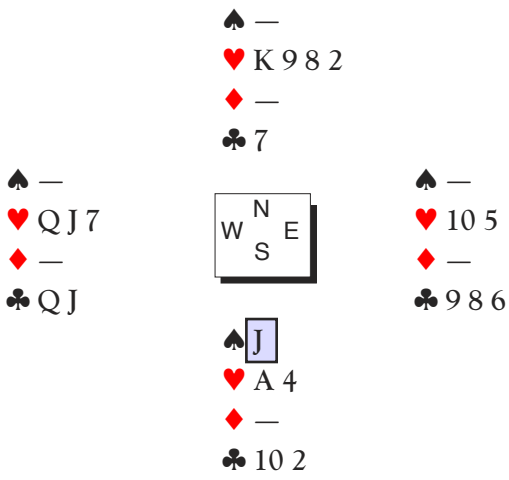
On the ♠8, West has to part with a club, while dummy and East pitch hearts. Then, when the heart is led to dummy, it's East's turn to feel the pressure.

Johan is an excellent technician and would no doubt have found this line, but he wasn't given the chance. When the club was led from dummy, East, Stefan Haglund, went up king — and that killed the contract. My guess is that he tried to win the trick in order to give his partner a diamond ruff, but the effect was deadly. If Johan ducks the ♣K, East gives West a diamond ruff; and if he wins and plays the ♣10, as he did, West's play of three rounds of spades stops the ruff:



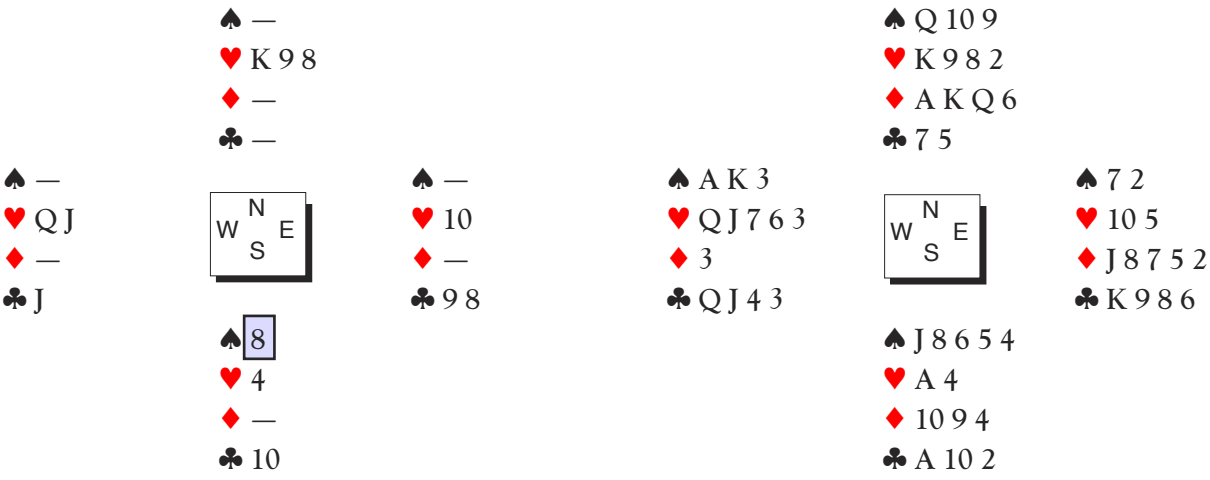
If Johan held the ♣9, all would have been well, but since East had it, there was no squeeze.

Suppose Johan had played a spade towards dummy after winning the ♣K with the ace. Then West has to play carefully. If he adopts the same defense as in the previous variation (three rounds of trumps), the contract makes on a squeeze without the count. After two high diamonds, the last diamond is ruffed in hand. Then on the last trump West has no answer:



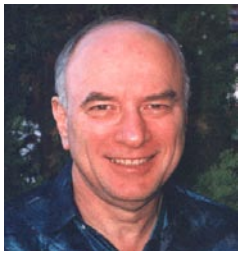
On the lead of the ♠J, West has to discard a club, but then Johan can establish his game-going trick in clubs, with the ♥A as an entry to cash it.

West can't defeat the contract by cashing one high club before three rounds of trumps, because then he subjects himself to an ordinary, single squeeze. South cashes dummy's diamond honors, leads a heart to his hand and play out his trumps.



On the last spade, West faces a familiar dilemma. So to defeat the contract after the diamond lead, club to the king and ace, and spade lead by South, West has to lead a heart.

This breaks up the squeeze no matter where South wins the trick. If South continues with trumps, West wins and plays his last trump.



The Wizards of Aus

Hands from Australian Tournaments

by Ron Klinger

The opening lead can make or break a contract. Try this problem from a team event. You are dealer (West), no one vul, holding:
♠ 4 ♥ A 10 9 4 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ A Q J 5 4.

West	North	East	South
1 ♣	1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♥
pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♥
double	(all pass)		

What would you lead? Your decision can produce a swing of 14 imps. (Full hand below.)

The deal is Board 65 from the final of the South Pacific Zone Teams:

	♠ Q ♥ Q J 7 ♦ A K Q 10 9 6 3 ♣ 10 7	
♠ 4 ♥ A 10 9 4 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ A Q J 5 4	N W E S	♠ 10 7 6 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ K 9 6 3
	♠ A K J 9 8 5 ♥ K 8 6 5 3 ♦ — ♣ 8 2	

At one table in both the Women's and the Open divisions, the bidding went:

West	North	East	South
1 ♣	3 ♦	(all pass)	

Opening lead from East: ♥2

North's 3♦ looks very strong for a pre-empt below game. Put me in with the 1♦ overcallers. In both finals, the defense followed the same path: ♥2 to the ace and the ♥4 returned for East to ruff. The ♣6 to the ♣A was followed by another heart ruff, and the ♣K put the contract one down.

In the Open, North dropped the ♥7 under the ace. That made it transparent to West that the opening lead was a singleton. North can afford to drop the ♥J or the ♥Q under the ♥A. That might persuade West

that East's opening lead was from honor third. If West does shift to a club, 3♦ can no longer be defeated.

	♠ Q ♥ Q J 7 ♦ A K Q 10 9 6 3 ♣ 10 7	
♠ 4 ♥ A 10 9 4 ♦ J 8 5 ♣ A Q J 5 4	N W E S	♠ 10 7 6 3 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ K 9 6 3
	♠ A K J 9 8 5 ♥ K 8 6 5 3 ♦ — ♣ 8 2	

Many North players would play the ♥7 rather than the ♥Q or ♥J. Why is that so? The answer is that it is not their fault. The fault lies with their parents. How so? Because their parents have brought them up to be thrifty and so they do not want to waste anything, not even a cost-nothing honor.

At the other table in the Women's final North-South reached 5♦. The lead was the ♥2 to the ace and North did drop the ♥Q. When West switched to the ♣A, East discouraged and so West reverted to hearts for two down, +100 and +2 imps.

At the other table in the Open final, the bidding went as given at the start of this column:

West	North	East	South
1 ♣	1 ♦	1 ♠	2 ♥
pass	3 ♥	pass	4 ♥
double	(all pass)		

West had to choose a lead. Since partner had bid spades, the opening salvo was the ♠4. This was disastrous. The ♠Q held and declarer promptly discarded two clubs on the ♦A-K. The ♥Q was allowed to hold and so declarer continued with the ♦Q, ditching the ♠8, followed by the ♦10, on which the ♠9 went away. West could ruff this, but made only one more trump trick. Declarer had 11 tricks for +690.

Is it being wise after the event to suggest West should lead the ♣A? West does not need any ruffs. West has two trump tricks regardless. In addition, if partner does have the ♠A, you will defeat the contract for sure and can score a ruff later if you wish. The usual principle with a four-card trump holding is to lead your long suit and hope to force declarer to ruff. If declarer has to ruff too often, declarer might lose trump control.

Suppose West does lead the ♣A, East will encourage and a club continuation will lead to one down. That would give East-West +100 and +2 imps instead of −690 and −12 imps.

You might be thinking, "Well, look at that rotten East hand. Why did East bid 1♠ with a 3-count? If East had kept quiet, West would not have as much temptation to lead a spade." Be that as it may, it does not excuse West's lead. Suppose East had:

♠ K 7 6 3 2
♥ 2
♦ 7 4 2
♣ K 9 6 3

Now you cannot complain about East bidding 1♠, but the ♠4 lead is still fatal.

The Switch in Time Forum

by the Granovetters

Questions and answers based on the "obvious shift principle" and other defensive methods, discussed in the book and Bridge Today Course: "A Switch in Time"

From Eric Kokish:

East dealer
E-W vul

North
♠ J 6
♥ K J 7 6
♦ Q 4
♣ A J 9 7 5

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

East
♠ 10 5
♥ A 4 2
♦ 8 5 3 2
♣ K 4 3 2

South
♠ A K Q 9 8 7 3
♥ 10 3
♦ J 9
♣ 10 8

West	North	East	South
—	—	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	4 ♠
(all pass)			

Opening lead: ♦A

At the table, East played the ♦2 and West shifted to a heart. When declarer ducked in dummy, he had two heart tricks and the contract.

How should the defense go and why? Should East encourage diamonds or discourage?

Should West cash a second diamond? If so, which diamond should East play? Which should he play with no heart honor? Or with the ♥Q but not the ♥A?

How does obvious switch relate to this difficult deal?

Answer

East wants a club shift. Hearts is the defined OS (obvious shift), so East should encourage diamonds, which discourages hearts, the OS.

On the second round of diamonds, East should go up the line (e.g., 5-8), and West should get the message that the only hope is clubs.

Logically, one might argue that clubs is the OS, because leading through an ace first is often better than leading through a king-jack. But to be effective, partnerships should play by the OS rules, which state clearly: When there is no weak three-card suit in dummy, the OS is the shorter (or weaker, if the side suits are equal length) of the two side suits. This does not apply to a singleton, since a singleton is not the OS to begin with.

Partnership Bridge

by the Granovetters

Mistaken Sympathy

Matthew: Last night over the dinner table I had to listen to the wife's story of her greatest bridge tragedy for the 100th time! It went like this:

"It was about seven years ago," said Pamela. "I was playing rubber at the Cavendish when I picked up:

♠ —
♥ A K J 10 9 8
♦ K 10 9 8 5 3 2
♣ —

"We were vulnerable against not, and the guy to my left opened three clubs. My partner overcalled three spades and the next seat passed. What would you bid?"

The dinner guests thought it over, hemmed, hawed, and someone finally came up with four clubs. "It doesn't promise spade support, does it? And you've got to make a forcing bid."

"Are you sure?" asked my wife. "This was rubber bridge where you don't have firm partnership agreements. Maybe you should simply bid four hearts and not risk a disaster. However, I did cue-bid at the time. The preempter passed and my partner bid four diamonds."

The guests got all excited. "Yes, yes, perfect," said one man. "I bid five notrump, the grand-slam force." Everyone nodded in agreement and Pamela's eyes began to glow.

"Then," she said, "my partner jumped to seven clubs, and the hand on my right doubled."

There was a hush, followed by calls for review:

			Pamela
West	North	East	South
3 ♣	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
pass	4 ♦	pass	5 NT
pass	7 ♣	double	?

"I don't see the problem," someone finally said. "You bid seven diamonds."

The wife nodded. "That's what I did."

Pamela
♠ —
♥ A K J 10 9 8
♦ K 10 9 8 5 3 2
♣ —

West	North	East	South
3 ♣	3 ♠	pass	4 ♣
pass	4 ♦	pass	5 NT
pass	7 ♣	double	?

"Then how is this your greatest bridge tragedy?"

"I'll tell you how! My partner went into the think-tank over seven diamonds, and came out with seven spades!!!"

Everybody dropped their forks and shook their heads. Then all eyes turned to me and asked what my hand was. This was very unfair because I was not my wife's partner at the time. I was not even married to her at the time. But it seems like it is now taken for granted that if Pamela Granovetter has a bidding tragedy, her husband is the culprit.

Pamela: But Matthew, it was only natural for everyone to assume you were my partner. Who else would overrule his partner at the seven level? Why, you should be pumpkin pleased every time I tell this story — delighted that you *weren't* my partner, since maybe then we'd never have gotten married.

Matthew: True, true. I'm very thankful I did not hold the other hand:

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

However, was your partner's bidding really that terrible? When he bid four diamonds over your cuebid, he was just marking time to see what your intentions were. And over five notrump, he assumed spade support and made the expert bid of seven clubs. Then, when you bid seven diamonds, he realized that a misunderstanding had taken place — that you thought his four-diamond bid was a suit. So he got nervous and took a chance you had a few spades for him.

The Last Word (Pamela): Are you trying to tell me that all these years your sympathies have been with that ridiculous seven-spade call?