

## We're Only Human

Sometimes, the winning play at the bridge table doesn't rely on calculating percentages or memorizing how to play suit combinations. Rather, we can be guided to success by recognizing that our opponents are human beings and that we all sometimes play with our heart as much as our head.

The following hand occurred in this week's Tuesday afternoon session and many declarers came unstuck in Three No Trumps by West on the lead of the Queen of Spades:

How should we play this hand?

BOARD 10						
BD: 10	♠ QJT4 ♥ K53 ♦ Q8 ♣ 9872			Dir: E Vul: ALL		
♠ A932 ♥ AQ87 ♦ J632 ♣ A				♠ 85 ♥ 94 ♦ KT9 ♣ KQJT54		
		♠ K76 ♥ JT62 ♦ A754 ♣ 63				
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT	
N						8
S						15 9
E	4	2	2	1	3	8
W	4	2	2	1	3	

Here's how Declarer should think about it when the dummy comes down:

"I have one Spade, one Heart, zero Diamonds and six Clubs. That's 8 tricks (and I better remember to unblock the Ace of Clubs before I get to dummy as there aren't many entries!)"

The first thing they should consider is the Spades - we have six, they have seven. If Spades are 4-3 we don't care (defenders will get the Ace of Diamonds and three Spades) but if they're 5-2 the defenders will get the Ace of Diamonds and potentially *four* Spades. So I'd better duck one round of Spades and win the second with the Ace - that helps if the Spades **do** break 5-2 but the Ace of Diamonds is in a different hand than the long spades.

Declarer should then cash the Ace of Clubs - we're not getting to dummy often and when we're there we are going to want to run our clubs.

Now the time comes to tackle diamonds; we can't stop them from winning the Ace, but we don't want them to score a trick with the Queen of Diamonds as well. Declarer should lead the two and will then have to guess here. The honours are *usually* split one in each hand. If the Queen is with south and the Ace with North then we need to play the King, if they're the other way we need to play dummy's Ten.

There isn't any clearcut reason to prefer one or the other. Good defenders should play low with North's hand holding either. However, looking at dummy's intimidating Club suit and the Diamond King, a lot of North's will jump in with the Ace of Diamonds if they've got it in order to grab their spades, fearful that Declarer will scramble home on dummy's Clubs.

As such, when North plays low, Declarer might guess to play them for having the Queen rather than the Ace and would insert dummy's Ten.

This works on this hand and the defenders can't stop us from making nine tricks now. The best they can do is cash two more spades (provided they unblocked the king at trick two!) If they play a heart back declarer won't risk the finesse, but will win the Ace of Hearts, go back to dummy's King of Diamonds and then collect their established club tricks.

The key here is not to get lost in probabilities or suit distributions but rather to put oneself in the opponent's shoes. We all know second-player-plays-low, but be honest – looking at that dummy, wouldn't *you* sometimes make the error of jumping in with the Ace? So might your opponents!