

22. The Bewitching Switch

By Ron Klinger

South dealer : East-West vulnerable

North
♠ 973
♥ 64
♦ KQJ1085
♣ A2

West
♠ AQ2
♥ J8752
♦ A
♣ 9643

South opens 1NT (15-17 points) and North raises to 3NT (better than showing the diamonds), all pass. West leads the ♥5: four – nine – king. South plays the ♦6: ace – five – nine. What would you play as West at trick 3?

When partner plays third-hand-high at trick 1, you can often piece together the layout in the suit led. Partner's ♥9 denies the ♥A (would have played the ace) and the ♥Q (would have played the queen). Therefore, declarer began with A-K-Q in hearts. East does have the ♥10. The correct card from 10-9 is the nine when playing third hand high. Declarer would have won trick 1 with the ♥10 if possible.

After trick 2, West can see that declarer has five diamond tricks, the ♣A and three hearts (by inference). If West plays a heart or a club at trick 3, declarer is sure to make 3NT, probably overtricks. To defeat 3NT, West needs to switch to a spade. Which spade?

North
♠ 973
♥ 64
♦ KQJ1085
♣ A2

West
♠ AQ2
♥ J8752
♦ A
♣ 9643

East
♠ K654
♥ 109
♦ 974
♣ 10875

South
♠ J108
♥ AKQ3
♦ 632
♣ KQJ

If West plays a heart or a club at trick 3, South can make 11 tricks. West should switch to a spade, but not the ♠2. That restricts you to three spade tricks. Recommended is the ♠Q. East will play an encouraging spade. Continue with the ♠A and the ♠2. East takes the ♠K and cashes the thirteenth spade. If you play ♠A first, then ♠Q, East might overtake with the ♠K from ♠K-x-x to cater for ♠A-Q-J-x with West.

The next problem comes from *Polish Bridge* magazine and was spotted by Wally Malaczynski of Sydney.

South dealer : Both vulnerable

North
♠ K62
♥ A10
♦ J84
♣ KJ852

West
♠ 95
♥ Q8643
♦ AQ2
♣ A9

South opens 3♠ and North bids 4♠, all pass. West leads the ♣A; two – seven – ten. You are playing low encourage. What do you play at trick 2?

North
♠ K62
♥ A10
♦ J84
♣ KJ852

West
♠ 95
♥ Q86543
♦ AQ2
♣ A9

East
♠ J
♥ KJ7
♦ K963
♣ Q7643

South
♠ AQ108743
♥ 92
♦ 1075
♣ 10

Against 4♠, West leads the ♣A. If West opts for the ♣9 next, South can play the ♣J, queen from East and ruffed by South. After ♠A and a spade to the king, declarer can cash the ♣K and ♣8, discarding two losers. The same result ensues if you switch to a heart. Declarer wins with dummy's ♥A and cashes ♠A, ♠K and ♠K, discarding a loser. Then comes the ♣J. If East plays low, South pitches another loser. If East covers the ♣J with the ♣Q, South ruffs and plays a low spade to dummy's ♠6, followed by the ♠8 to throw another loser.

After the ♣A, West can see that the defence needs three more tricks. There is at most one trick in hearts and likely no more in clubs. The best hope is to collect three diamond tricks. Given South's 3♠ opening, there is a strong chance that East has the ♦K. Which diamonds should West play?

Best is to switch to the ♦Q. East will play an encouraging card. West continues with the ♦A and the ♦2 to the ♦K for one down. If you start with ♦A, then ♦Q, East might well play you for A-Q tight and overtake the ♦Q with the ♦K, followed by a low diamond for you to ruff. Oops.

Problem for Tomorrow:

With only North-South vulnerable, North deals and passes. What do you do as East with:

♠ AJ1098543
♥ --
♦ K95
♣ 87

Why not discuss the problems by phone with your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

*I know a bridge player named Cass
Who simply never will pass
Complains of bad breaks
And his partner's mistakes,
Oh, what a pain in the ass!
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