

# 233. Count vs attitude

By Ron Klinger

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♦	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	Pass	3NT
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

What would you lead as West from:

- ♠ 1094
- ♥ 2
- ♦ AK106
- ♣ J7643

Make your decision before reading further.

The normal opening lead for West is a top diamond. You are cashing a winner, you get to see dummy and you can see partner's signal before deciding on your next play.

The deal comes from a teams' match on BBO. After the lead of a top diamond, this is what you see:

Dealer West : North-South vulnerable

	North
	♠ 7
	♥ KJ64
	♦ QJ75
	♣ KQ102
West	
	♠ 1094
	♥ 2
	♦ AK106
	♣ J7643

One West led the ♦K, asking for count (natural count, high-low = even number, low-high = odd number): five – four – eight. What do you play at trick 2? Decide before reading further/

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ KJ64	
	♦ QJ75	
	♣ KQ102	
West		East
	♠ 1094	♠ K8653
	♥ 2	♥ A108
	♦ AK106	♦ 42
	♣ J7643	♣ 985
	South	
	♠ AQJ2	
	♥ Q9753	
	♦ 983	
	♣ A	

West led the ♦K asking for count: five – four – eight. Players who give count signals usually play the top card from a doubleton and second-highest from four. That can create ambiguity, as it did here. From West's perspective, East could have had 4-3 or 4-2 or 9-4-3-2. Had South played the ♦3 at trick 1, the position is still ambiguous for West. East could have 4-2 or 9-8-4. West was not prepared to play the ♦A at trick 2 and possibly set up two winners in dummy. West switched to the ♠10: seven – six – queen. Dave Beauchamp (S) cashed the ♣A, ruffed the ♠2 in dummy and ditched the ♦3 and ♦9 on the ♣K, ♣Q. Then came a trump to knock out the ♥A. South thus made 11 tricks for +650.

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ KJ64	
	♦ QJ75	
	♣ KQ102	
West		East
♠ 1094		♠ K8653
♥ 2		♥ A108
♦ AK106		♦ 42
♣ J7643		♣ 985
	South	
	♠ AQJ2	
	♥ Q9753	
	♦ 983	
	♣ A	

At the other table, the bidding went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass <sup>(1)</sup>	1♠	Pass
2♠	Dble	Pass	4♥
Pass	Pass	Pass	

(1) Most players would open this hand, 1♦ being the choice for those who play Standard American.

West led the ♦A, the standard opening lead for most West players. The ♦A lead asks partner to signal whether they want the suit continued or whether to switch. East played the ♦2: low encouraging. West continued with the ♦K and the ♦10. East ruffed and the ♥A later meant one down, East-West +100 and +13 Imps. That was a simple defence. Low-encouraging has the advantage that if you want to encourage you will always have your lowest card.

## Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : North-South vulnerable

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	1♦
			?

What would you do as South with:

♠ 7  
♥ KQ94  
♦ AKJ53  
♣ 1084

**Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?**

*As parched as a desert, a simile walks into a bar.*