233. Count ys 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
- **v** 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
- ♦ OJ75
- ♣ KQ102

West

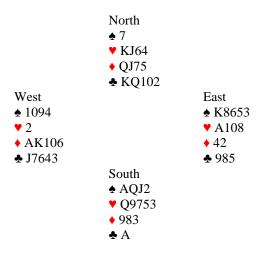
- **♠** 1094
- **v** 2
- ♦ AK106
- **♣** J7643

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 **1**094 **1 ★** K8653 **v** 2 ♥ A108 **4**2 ♦ AK106 **♣** J7643 **♣** 985 South ♠ AQJ2 ♥ O9753

> ♦ 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.



At the other table, the bidding went:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass ⁽¹⁾	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
			1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	?

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.