

This month's hand is similar to last month's in that the winning line of play changes from a 50:50 guess to a certainty once you process all of the information available to you from the bidding and early play.

KJ53
AQ6
K102
763

Q108
1073
AJ64
A108

With neither side vulnerable West dealt and opened One Club. North Doubled (wanting to get involved at this vulnerability despite the flat shape), East Passed and South responded Two No Trumps. With his high cards well placed behind the opening bidder, North raised to Three No Trumps.

The first three tricks were :

KC, 3, 2, 8
QC, 6, 4, 10
JC, 7, 5, A

Declarer was lucky that East followed suit each time but the contract was not yet assured. Declarer led his Queen of spades at trick 4. West won with the Ace and cashed the thirteenth club on which North and East discarded hearts while South discarded a low diamond. West led a spade at trick 6, won by South's 10. A finesse of dummy's Queen of hearts won trick 7 and the Ace of hearts won trick 8, West following with the Jack. This was the position with North on lead and N/S needing all five of the remaining tricks :

KJ

K102

8
10
AJ6

West has shown up with the King, Queen and Jack of clubs (6 points), the Ace of spades (4 points), the Jack of hearts (1 point) and the winning heart finesse at trick 7 places him with the King of hearts (3 points) : a total of 14 points. Declarer needs to find the Queen of diamonds for his ninth trick.

Question : What would you do at this point ? (Clue : what do you know about the shape of West's hand ?)

West started with four clubs, is known to have at least two spades and appears to have three hearts. Since West opened the bidding with One Club, he cannot have five cards in spades (else he'd have opened One Spade). So, West's shape is one of the following : 4324, 3334, 2344. Even if West's Jack

of hearts at trick 8 was a sneaky false card from an original holding of KJxx, his shape will be 2434 or 3424. Conclusion : West started with a balanced hand.

Answer : You should have a look at the E/W convention card to see the strength of their opening One No Trump bid. If it is 12-14 then **West** must have the missing Queen of diamonds else he'd have opened One No Trump. If E/W play a strong No Trump then **East** must have the Queen of diamonds.

In practice, E/W were playing a weak No Trump so you cash dummy's two spade winners, lead a diamond to the Ace and finesse the 10 on the way back. Game made.

Enjoy your bridge.