

Card Play

What do we already know?

28th August

The bidding is over ...

- You are on lead – what do you do?
- You are declarer, you receive the opening lead and dummy goes down What do you do?
- Do you conduct a detailed review of what has happened so far and what that tells you?
- If you do that at trick one – do you do it again as the hand develops?
- I'm going to try and convince you that if you listen to the clues you will be surprised by what you (could/should) already know

HINT – Whether declaring or defending do not be afraid to take your time at trick one to try to build a picture of the whole hand

An example ...

You hold (as West)
(NS Vul)

S 6

H 10 6 4 2

D A K 6 4

C 9 6 4 2

And the bidding goes

N	E	S	W
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2C	Pass	2H	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

So what do we know?

This is a fairly ordinary auction

North has 11 or 12 HCPs – four Spades and not four Hearts.

South has 13/14 HCPs – four Hearts and not Four spades

East has 7/8 HCPs and probably 5 Spades - NS have a maximum of 7 Spades between them and if partner had a six card suit (and especially at this vulnerability) may well have opened 2S.

....You lead the King of Diamonds... you see dummy
 Declarer plays the 3 of diamonds and partner plays the 2 ...

S A 9 7 5
 H J 5
 D J 5 **3**
 C A Q 5 3

S 6
 H 10 6 4 2
 D A **K** 6 4
 C 9 6 4 2

N	E	S	W
	Pass	1NT	Pass
2C	Pass	2H	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

What do you know now?

If you are playing Ace for attitude and King for count (which is what we teach) then the 2 from partner shows an odd number of cards (therefore 3). If partner has 5 Spades then the rest of her hand is 3 Diamonds, 3 Hearts and therefore 2 Clubs. Therefore after the first trick you probably know the shape of everybody's hands.

Note that if East has DQ she will know that the only high cards West has are the Ace and King of Diamonds

Another example ...

You hold (as West)

S 8 6 5 4 2

H A 8

D Q J 10 6

C A 7

And the bidding goes

N	E	S	W
1NT	Pass	3S	Pass
3NT	Pass	4H	All Pass

What do you lead?

You lead a Spade and if you are on the same wavelength as partner you will lead the 2 (which will ask for a Club return) if partner ruffs the opening lead. Why should partner have a shortage in Spades? South has shown 5 or 6 Spades and probably 5 Hearts. North must have at least 2 Spades and therefore has either 0 or 1 Spade so leading a Spade will either give partner an immediate ruff or when you are in with the Ace of Hearts you can give partner a ruff.

One more example ...

You are South and you are in 5D

S A Q 10 8

H 3 2

D J 9 6 5 4

C Q J 4

S 6

H 5 4

D A Q 10 8 7

C A K 10 8 7

And the bidding was

N	E	S	W
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1D	Pass
1S	Pass	2C	Pass
3D	Pass	5D	All Pass

West leads the Jack of Hearts. East cashes the AK of Hearts and then plays a small club. How do you play the hand?

So the key question on this hand is do you take the Diamond finesse or cash the Ace of Diamonds hoping for a singleton King? In the absence of any other information you should take the finesse.

However – East has shown up with AKQ of Hearts and if they also had the King of Diamonds they would have a 12 count and therefore they would have opened the bidding.

Therefore the right thing to do is cash the Ace of Diamonds and hope that West has singleton King.

.... Some commentary on the six
hands we played

SAQ86
H8642
D6
CA1086

S103
HAKQ109
DA10843
C2

S42
HJ3
DK952
CQ7543

SKJ975
H75
DQJ7
CKJ9

N	E	S	W
			1H
Pass	1NT	Pass	2D
Pass	Pass	2S	3D
4S	All Pass		

So who has the Queen of Clubs?

Declarer has two Heart losers and a Diamond loser so the key to the hand is to not lose a Club trick.

From the bidding West should be at least 5-5 in Hearts and Diamonds. When they follow to two rounds of trumps you know they only have one club. So when South plays a Club towards dummy and West does not produce the Queen East must have it.

S 9 8 6 2
 H J 2
 D 4 3 2
 C 10 8 6 4

S A K Q 5
 H 8 6 4
 D J 8 6
 C A Q J

S J 10
 H A K Q 7 3
 D 10 9 7
 C 9 3 2

S 7 4 3
 H 10 9 5
 D A K Q 5
 C K 7 5

N	E	S	W
			1S
Pass	2H	Pass	4H
All Pass			

After South cashes the AKQ of Diamonds the question she needs to ask is what can partner have which will allow us to beat the contract?

Clearly North does not have much. West has 17 HCPs and East has at least 9 and I have 12 so at best a Queen and possibly only a Jack (or less!). The answer is for South to hope partner has the J or Q of Hearts and will ruff with it when I play a fourth round of Diamonds. If she has the card and she plays it then I will make a trick with the ten of Hearts.

S 6
 H Q J 10 9 5
 D Q 5
 C K J 5 3 2

S Q J 8 7
 H 8 2
 D A J 9 6
 C Q 8 4

S A K 10 9 4 3
 H 6 4
 D K 10 8 7
 C 6

S 5 2
 H A K 7 3
 D 4 3 2
 C A 10 9 7

So South cashed the Ace and King of Hearts and the Ace of Clubs and played another club.

So Declarer has lost three tricks so needs the rest. **So who has the Queen of Diamonds?** The answer is that it must be with North as South has shown 11 points already and therefore cannot have the Queen of Diamonds as she would not have passed with a 13 count.

N	E	S	W
		Pass	Pass
Pass	1S	Pass	3S
Pass	4S	All Pass	

SAK8642
 HQ
 DA8
 C7654

SQ107
 HAKJ32
 DKJ1032
 C

S9
 H1097
 DQ754
 CKJ932

SJ53
 H8654
 D96
 CAQ108

N	E	S	W
			1H
1S	Pass	Pass	2D
2S	3D	3S	4D
4S	All Pass		

Assuming East is not mean enough to lead a Club (which someone did...!) and they lead one of partner's suits then North knows that she has a Heart loser and a Diamond loser. When she cashes the Ace and King of Spades and East shows out on the second round she also knows she has a trump loser so she needs to play the Club suit for four tricks. How should she play the suit.

From the bidding West must have 10 red cards and has shown up with 3 spades and therefore must have 0 clubs so declarer should play a small Club and play the lowest card from dummy which beats whatever East has played.

S K Q 3
 H K Q J 9 5
 D 4 3 2
 C J 10

S 8 6 4
 H A 7 3
 D Q 9 7
 C A K Q 8

S A 5
 H 8 6 4 2
 D A J 10 8 6
 C 7 5

S J 10 9 7 2
 H 10
 D K 5
 C 9 6 4 3 2

N	E	S	W
1H	2D	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

North leads the King of Hearts. How should West play the hand?

Most people, when this was played on the night we ran the seminar, ducked the lead. This is wrong and at one table someone did switch to King of Spades (good switch!) and now the contract is off.

The logic goes something like this: if the Diamond finesse works we have at least 10 top tricks. What happens if South has the King of Diamonds? They will either have no Hearts left to play (if North started with five) or if they do have another one, North only started with four and can therefore only make three Hearts tricks. West will still make 3NT with three Clubs, four Diamonds and two major suit Aces.

S 9 8 7
 H K 8
 D A Q 9 5 4
 C K 3 2

S Q 3 2
 H 10 4
 D 7 6 3
 C A Q J 10 9

S K J 5 4
 H 9 3 2
 D K J
 C 8 7 5 4

S A 10 6
 H A Q J 7 6 5
 D 10 8 2
 C 6

N	E	S	W
			Pass
1D	Pass	1H	2C
Pass	Pass	DBLE	Pass
2D	3C	3H	Pass
4H	All Pass		

This is a very tough hand and I can't do justice to it in the space I have.

The key point is that you don't know all you need to know at trick one or even in the first few tricks. You must seek out the clues, in this case, to decide how to play the Diamond suit. Ordinarily the right play, in the absence of other information, is to take the Double Finesse.

It is likely that when Declarer comes to decide what to do with Diamonds they will be able to infer enough to get it right.

As I say a tough hand!