

## Witness for the Defenceless – Part 3

It's not only misdefences in games and slams that are costly in bridge – even innocuous looking part-scores can lead to poor results when expensive mistakes are made. Here we will see East make a fundamental error that gave his grateful opponents an absolute top board in a match-point event in our club. As always, names have been withheld to protect the guilty.

<p>♠ AKJ9 ♥ J3 ♦ 9765 ♣ 985</p>		<p>Vulnerable: Neither Dealer: West</p>																					
<p>♠ 642 ♥ 85 ♦ KQ432 ♣ K43</p>		<p>Bidding:</p> <table><tr><td>North</td><td>East</td><td>South</td><td>West</td></tr><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>Pass</td><td>1 ♥</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>1 ♠</td><td>2 ♣</td><td>2 ♥</td><td>Pass</td></tr><tr><td>Pass</td><td>Pass</td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>		North	East	South	West				Pass	Pass	Pass	1 ♥	Pass	1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass		
North	East	South	West																				
			Pass																				
Pass	Pass	1 ♥	Pass																				
1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♥	Pass																				
Pass	Pass																						
<p>♠ 873 ♥ KQ9762 ♦ A8 ♣ AJ</p>		<p>Opening Lead: ♣ 3</p>																					

West led the club 3, lowest from three cards in her partner's suit. Declarer covered with the 8 and East inexplicably played the 10, which South happily gobbled up with the jack. Now, after knocking out the trump ace and winning the club continuation, declarer was able to draw trumps, take one losing spade finesse, win the diamond switch and cash dummy's long spade to pitch his losing diamond and emerge with 11 tricks!

One of bridge's most enduring maxims is "third hand high" and there is a very good reason for it – you don't want declarer to win a trick more cheaply than necessary. Although East didn't know what combination of clubs West was leading from, playing the queen at trick one catered to all possibilities. If South had the ace and king, he was always going to score them so playing the queen cost nothing. But if West had the king, as in this deal, then it was important to play the queen at trick one to guarantee a club trick for your side.

Sometimes less experienced players are reluctant to play their highest card in third seat, hoping that a lower card will force declarer to exhaust his ace but that is flawed thinking as this layout demonstrates.

<p> ♠ Q104  ♥ AKJ8  ♦ Q84  ♣ Q72 </p>		<p> Vulnerable: East-West  Dealer: East </p>	
<p> ♠ 2  ♥ 92  ♦ A9653  ♣ AKJ86 </p>		<p> Bidding: </p>	
<p> ♠ AK8  ♥ Q7643  ♦ J72  ♣ 43 </p>		North	East
<p> ♠ J97653  ♥ 105  ♦ K10  ♣ 1095 </p>		South	West
		Pass	1 ♦
		DBL	1 ♥
		Pass	2NT
		Pass	Pass
		Opening Lead: ♠ 6	

Another of bridge's long-standing axioms is "cover an honour with an honour" that one defender forgot while trying to defeat this contract. East declared 2 no trump and South led his fourth best spade. North played the queen which East ducked. North continued with the spade 10 won by declarer who then played the diamond jack on which South played the 10. This trick was won by North's queen but when East won the spade continuation her diamond ace felled South's king and her diamond 9 captured North's 8. All in all, declarer made 2 spades, 4 diamonds and 2 clubs and her contract was secure.

Look what happens if South plays the king on the diamond jack: declarer has to play her ace to win the trick. But then South will win his ten and North will win his queen separately holding declarer to 7 tricks and defeating the contract.

So in future as you make your way to a bridge game repeat the mantra: "third hand high, cover an honour with an honour" 10 times and if you follow that advice you will see your results improve dramatically!