



3 Trust your opponents *Richard Samter*

The heading is not to be followed unconditionally. You have to form a view as to how competent they are, but it often gives a hint how to make contracts. This example came up in a recent Crockfords match. Our team (Susie Gall and Trevor Purches, Norman Botton and I) were playing a strong team (Jacqueline and Robert Baker, Jetta and Alan Bailey). We were trailing slightly after 16 boards, and then I got my chance.

I had the South hand at favourable vulnerability against the Baileys. East passed, and I had my first decision. Do I open 1♣ or 3♣? I chose to open 1♣ in case we had a 5-3 fit in one of the major suits. The bidding proceeded:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
-	-	Pass	1♣
1♥	2♦	2♥	3♣
4♥	5♣	Dbl	All pass

West let the ♥K (asking for count on their system) and East played the 8, showing an odd number. West then continued with a low spade.

I looked at dummy, and heaved a sigh of relief. He hadn't led trumps, so I can now ruff two hearts in dummy and make seven trumps in hand and two spades in dummy. 11 tricks for +550 when they can probably make game in hearts. So I went up with the ace, ruffed a diamond in hand and a heart in dummy with all following suit low. I then ruffed another diamond in hand (West playing the ♦A), and another heart in dummy. I had now won five tricks, and was in dummy with the cards shown right

 I led a diamond to get back to my hand and draw trumps. East followed with the ♦Q, and I started worrying. What should I play now?

 It depends on what cards are left:

I can ruff high and draw trumps. That's fine if the trumps are 2-2. If West has 3, I can throw her in with the last trump. She should be out of hearts by now since she showed an odd number (presumably 3), so will be end-played. If East has 3 trumps, I've always got a trump loser, but this way I keep control and can take the spade finesse without risking a further trump promotion.

Trumping with the 7 is better if the diamonds are 3-3 or East can't beat the 7 of clubs. I can then draw 3 rounds of trumps. If West started with 4, I can then cross to the A of spades and lead another diamond, making my last trump en passant. This is safer than the end-play above because she might have false-carded on the heart lead.

 I missed the implication of West's defence on the first two tricks and ruffed high, losing two trumps when East had all four of them. Was I unlucky?

Yes, but I didn't need to be. As I said at the beginning, they are both strong players. Why didn't East draw dummy's trumps and stop me ruffing a heart? Either he's made an obvious mistake, or he hasn't got any clubs. Looking at it that way, which is likelier?

♠ AK10
 ♥ 7
 ♦ J987543
 ♣ Q9

HILTON
 WEST Dealer
 SOUTH

♠ J92
 ♥ 965
 ♦ -
 ♣ AKJ7532

♠ A10
 ♥ -
 ♦ J9875
 ♣ -

HILTON
 WEST Dealer
 SOUTH

♠ J9
 ♥ -
 ♦ -
 ♣ AKJ75

The full deal:

	♠ AK10	
	♥ 7	
	♦ J987543	
	♣ Q9	
♠ Q8643	NORTH	♠ 75
♥ AKQ104	WEST	♥ J83
♦ A6	DEALER	♦ KQ102
♣ -	SOUTH	♣ 10864
	♠ J92	
	♥ 965	
	♦ -	
	♣ AKJ7532	

At the other table, South decided to open 3♣ and the bidding went:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
-	-	Pass	3♣
Dbl	Pass	3♦	Pass
3♥	4♣	4♥	5♣
5♥	All pass		

North led ♠A, South playing the 9. He saw that dummy had 4 in each minor, so played his partner for a diamond void. Two down, and a loss of 7 imps when we could have gained 8 ...