



5 Wanted: two tricks

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One of the joys of bridge is that there are so many ways you can get things wrong! My latest effort occurred in the Wilts/Avon joint congress held at Bath University. I was partnering Maurice Baker, with team-mates Adam Harvey and Martin Buck. We were doing reasonably well when this hand came up in the penultimate round.

The bidding was straightforward:

West	North	East	South
-	1♣	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT

Sitting South, I was declarer, and as we were playing seven-board matches it was important not to go off in cold game contracts. So I thought for a while, pondering what was the best line of play.

♠ AQ2
♥ K73
♦ 43
♣ AKQ76



♠ K753
♥ QJ2
♦ J1098
♣ 83



Stop at this point and work out what you would do; the first trick went ♥4, ♥3, ♥10, ♥J. What would you play at trick two?



Let's consider the options. The good news is that you have only four losers: ♦AKQ and ♥A. The bad news is that after the heart lead you have only seven winners: ♣AKQ, ♠AKQ and ♥J. Where do you go for the 8th and 9th tricks?

You could duck a club, catering for a 4-2 break, but that would be silly as you would then have an additional club loser to go with your original four losers. Slightly better is to run off the top three clubs, but again you have a certain 5th loser if the suit does not break. How about tackling spades? Again you have the problem of having established a 5th trick for the defence if the suit does not divide, although you have the fallback of being able to try clubs before admitting defeat if neither black suit divides. But surely there must be something better.

What about playing the ♦J at trick two? A kindly defence may cash the ♦AKQ, setting up a diamond winner to go with three clubs, three spades and two hearts. After all, it is unlikely that the hand with the ♥A (presumably West, from the lead) also has five diamonds; otherwise he would probably have led a diamond. But you are playing against a good team, and surely they would smell a rat if you led a diamond, clearly your weakest suit. The only reason could be that you were looking to establish your 9th trick with a long diamond, so their obvious riposte would be to revert to hearts after winning their first diamond.



I had got this far when the sky was beginning to turn dark, and the opposition were stifling yawns, so I made my decision and promptly went one down. I missed what I think now was the best option: play a second heart at trick two. This establishes your 8th trick, and the contract will now make if either black suit breaks. But you really gain if opponents win the heart and switch to diamonds setting up your final winner in diamonds, which is plausible and the only winning line if neither black suit divides 3-3.

So shamefacedly I returned to score up with my team-mates, pencilling in minus 13 on the board. Did they find the heart continuation at trick two, I asked? No, came the reply, they played in ♠4, which rolled in on the 3-3 spade break. Funny game, bridge!