

I've Got A Secret

IMPs  
South Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ A Q J 6	♠ 10	♠ 5 3 2									
♥ A Q 7 3	♥ 9 8 6 5 2	♥ K 10 4									
♦ 9 8	♦ A Q 7 5	♦ J 2									
♣ A 7 5	♣ J 10 4	♣ Q 9 8 3 2									
	<div style="display: inline-block; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; padding: 5px; margin: 5px;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ K 9 8 7 4										
	♥ J										
	♦ K 10 6 4 3										
	♣ K 6										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 N	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2 ♥	All pass		
2 ♥ by West			

In previous discussions, I have used popular TV shows as the basis for better understanding recurring themes as they apply at the bridge table. I spoke to you about the old TV show entitled "Who Do You Trust" from the 60's that starred a young Johnny Carson. I also used the "Let's Make A Deal" analogy of "Door Number 1 or Door Number 2?" to help reduce complex decisions into simple binary "yes or no" considerations. Today, I am going to refresh your forgettery of the popular TV show of the 50's, 60's, and 70's - "I've Got A Secret" that was hosted by Gary Moore, Steve Allen, and others over the years. If I may digress, I just learned that this show was actually created by Allie Sherman of "Hello Muddah, Hello Farder" fame.

The above hand features an all too common "I've Got A Secret" situation. South's balancing 2D bid was "Meckwell" - it showed diamonds and an unspecified major suit. Imagine North's surprise! He surely expected to partner to balance with 2S and knowing his partner didn't open 2S in first seat, he'd be in a 5-1 fit and surely on his was to a poor result - especially if doubled. There was a chance, of course, that partner's major suit could be hearts - in which case his opps have a lot of spades. Well, North kept his secret diamond support to himself, and quietly passed. But the auction wasn't over. East reopened with a double, and when West bid 2H, North was happy to defend. Well, he thought he was happy. As it turns out, even with best defense, EW were cold for at least 8 tricks in hearts, while NS were cold for at least 9 tricks in diamonds. When both sides are making a partial at IMPs, it is a significant swing - about 6 IMPs. North had an opportunity to share his secret with his partner, keep all options open, and still provide a degree of confusion and deception - all at the same time. Instead of meekly passing 2D, he should bid 2H - which is alerted to say "pass or correct to 2S". Now when South bids 2S, North should go back to 3D! It's going to be very tough for the opponents to come in after this.

I've Got A Secret

IMPs  
 South Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ A Q J 6	♠ 10	♠ 5 3 2
♥ A Q 7 3	♥ 9 8 6 5 2	♥ K 10 4
♦ 9 8	♦ A Q 7 5	♦ J 2
♣ A 7 5	♣ J 10 4	♣ Q 9 8 3 2
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;">                 N                  W     E                  S             </div>	
	♠ K 9 8 7 4	
	♥ J	
	♦ K 10 6 4 3	
	♣ K 6	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 N	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2 ♥	All pass		

2 ♥ by West

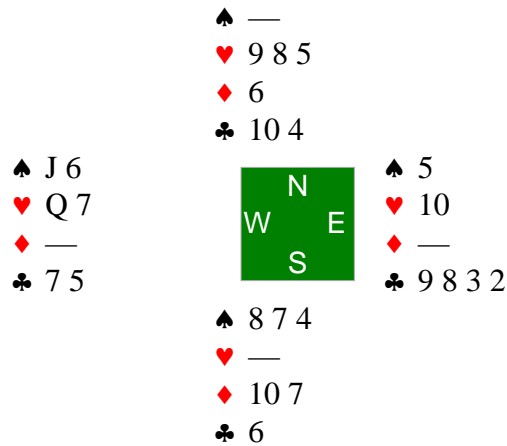
Let's take a few minutes going over the play of 2H by EW as well as the play of 3D by NS.

Let's say North leads his singleton spade. West can win and play A of hearts and Ace and a club, ducking to South's K. Now a spade can be ruffed, a diamond led to South's 10 another spade ruffed, a diamond to the K and another spade ruff. That's the best defense I can see, and that still only totals 5 tricks for the defense - 2 diamonds, 1 club, and 2 spade ruffs.

Now, let's look at the hand from the other side. West's best lead is a trump. North should win in dummy and run the 10 of spades to West - who should make the foresighted play of the Q - we'll come back to that later.

West will play a second trump, which declarer will win in hand lay A and a heart forcing South to ruff in hand. Now let's assume that South now plays the K of spades out of hand. West will cover with his Ace, which will be ruffed in dummy. Now the J of clubs is led from dummy. As it turns out, East does well to cover with the Q! This may seem counter-intuitive, but the key suit is spades on this hand, and Declarer will certainly duck should you play low, and now your partner cannot afford to duck in case you started with the K. Covering with the Q will deprive South of an important later nontrump entry to his hand. West will will the A of clubs and now play another heart. This will get ruffed by South and now here is the critical decision with South on play.

I've Got A Secret



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 N	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♦	All pass	

3 ♦ by South

South has lost the Q of Spades, the Ace of clubs, and the Ace of hearts. South now plays the 8 of spades and West should smoothly follow with the 5. Do you see why he played the Q earlier? Declarer knows that West started with AQ of spades, AQ of hearts, and A of clubs. He doesn't need the J of spades for his 1 NT opener. On the basis of the earlier play, it certainly appears that West started with the J of spades.

Now, when South leads the 8 of spades, if West covers with the J, declarer will ruff in dummy, and claim - making 4.

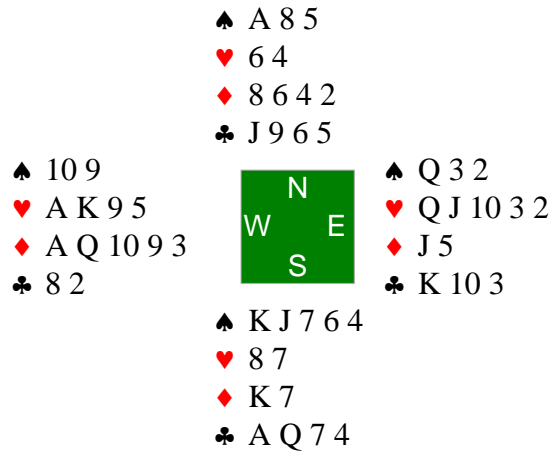
Let's assume South is fooled and ruffs in dummy. He can now ruff a heart, but he has to lose a trick to West's J of Spades - making 3.

Either way, NS does a lot better playing the hand in 3D than letting EW play 2H.

Let's give a few more examples of keeping a secret to the detriment of your side's best results, then end up with a couple of examples in which keeping a secret will help your side - and not your opponents.

I've Got A Secret

South Deals  
Both Vul



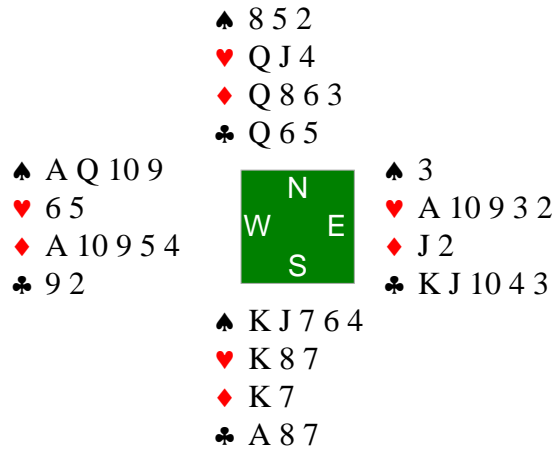
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
4 ♥	All pass		
4 ♥ by East			

On the above diagrammed deal, North had a secret. He had Axx of spades. But he only had 5 high card points and was concerned that bidding 2S would show more, so he passed. Now when the auction went 2H by E, pass, 4H, he was boxed in and couldn't bid. Not surprisingly, South led a passive trump from his hand, and now a contract that had no play was suddenly ice cold.

Contrast the North hand here with the North hand on the following deal....

I've Got A Secret

South Deals  
Both Vul



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♦	2 ♠	Dbl	1 ♠
			All pass

2 ♠ × by South

On this deal, North also had a secret. He had a 4-3-3-3 hand with tons of losers and a spade holding he didn't want partner to lead into. While he had 7 high card points compared to the previous hand in which he only had 5 hcp, this hand is a really lousy hand. After the lead of the 9 of clubs, declarer ended up losing 2 clubs, 1 heart, 1 diamond and 4 spades! Down 3 doubled vulnerable against a partial EW that was made at most tables.

Secrets like this one are best kept to oneself!

I've Got A Secret

South Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ A 4 3 2	♠ Q 10 5	♠ 9 7
♥ A Q 9 3	♥ 10 7 2	♥ K J 6 5 4
♦ 4	♦ K J 7 5 3	♦ 10
♣ K 9 7 2	♣ 10 6	♣ J 8 5 4 3
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; border: 1px solid black;">                 N W     E S             </div>	
	♠ K J 8 6	
	♥ 8	
	♦ A Q 9 8 6 2	
	♣ A Q	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Dbl	2 ♦	4 ♥	1 ♦ All pass

4 ♥ by East

Here, North's secret was that he had 5 card trump support for partner! Instead of making a simple raise to the 2 level, he really should have made the much more descriptive jump to 3D. Now South would be much more likely to take the clear "sacrifice" in 5D. Note that 5D can be set if and only if EW find the killing defense of a low heart to the K followed by a club shift. (Not very likely to occur in reality!) South thought he might not beat 4 hearts (it is ice cold on this lie of the cards!), but he did have good defense prospects and was concerned that the opponents's spades might be behind this KJxx and the opps could be setting him easily on a hand that might be going down. (diamonds 2-2 and partner has a trump trick, for example).

I've got a favorite expression - "show me your trumps!". Whether you call it "The Law of Total Tricks" or just common sense, the bottom line is that big trump fits make your trick-taking potential larger and lack of trump fits diminishes your trick taking potential.

Here's another recent example....

I've Got A Secret

West Deals  
None Vul

♠ J 2	♠ K 10 7 5 4	♠ 9 3									
♥ A K 8 5	♥ J 9 6 4	♥ Q 10 3 2									
♦ K J 7	♦ 5	♦ 10 8 4									
♣ K J 8 3	♣ Q 4 2	♣ 10 9 7 5									
	<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 60px; height: 60px;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A Q 8 6										
	♥ 7										
	♦ A Q 9 6 3 2										
	♣ A 6										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 NT	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠
All pass			

2 ♠ by South

Here's another example of North holding a lot more spades than the auction might otherwise suggest. South's balancing 2D bid showed Diamonds and an unspecified major suit. North's 2H bid said "Pass or correct to 2S". When South did correct to spades, North's hand became huge and clearly warranted a raise - at least to 3. South would happily accept any invite.

NOTE: It will be nearly impossible to get to the slam that is ice-cold on this lie of the cards, but game would be a piece of cake.

I've Got A Secret

West Deals  
N-S Vul

♠ 6 5			
♥ K J 6 2			
♦ A 4 3			
♣ K 10 9 4			
♠ A K Q 9 7	<div style="background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">                 N W     E    S             </div>	♠ J 10 8 4	
♥ A Q		♥ 10	
♦ Q 10 8		♦ K J 7 6 5	
♣ Q 6 5		♣ 8 7 3	
		♠ 3 2	
		♥ 9 8 7 5 4 3	
		♦ 9 2	
		♣ A J 2	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♠	Dbl	3 ♠	4 ♣
4 ♠	All pass		

4 ♠ by West


Here South has a secret 6 card heart suit, and only a 3 card club suit. But South realizes that a heart lead is likely to cost a trick - or at least an important tempo. EW's spade suit outranks NS's hearts. A 5H sacrifice will be very costly (down 2 on this lie of the cards) - especially since 4S will go down on a club lead!

So, as long as the secret 3 card holding is in a lower ranking suit than our known long heart fit, getting the lead directional bid will be confusing to partner, but partner doesn't have to be in on this secret. He/she will be more than happy to be pleasantly surprized by this great result.



### I've Got A Secret

West Deals  
None Vul

♠ A K 8		♠ Q J 6 4 3
♥ 9 6 5		♥ 7
♦ A 8		♦ K 7 4 3
♣ A K J 8 6		♣ Q 5 2
	♠ 10 9 5 2	
	♥ J 10 3 2	
	♦ J 9 6 5	
	♣ 10	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♣	1 ♥	1 ♠	3 ♥
4 ♥	Dbl	4 ♠	Pass
4 N	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♦	Pass
6 ♠	All pass		

6 ♠ by East

OK. One last example of a secret best not shared at the table. When you know your side can not buy the hand, and you don't have any lead directional benefit to bidding, it is frequently best to stay quiet.

On many hands, the opponents will be able to infer that partner will be short in your long suit and get to games or slams that they might never otherwise.

It's possible that EW will find this excellent slam if South is able to keep his heart length secret, but it's a lot easier for West to infer his side only has one heart loser when South suggests at least 4 card heart support for partner.

Bottom line is, as we said at the outset, keep secrets that will only help your opponents. Don't keep secrets that will only help your side.