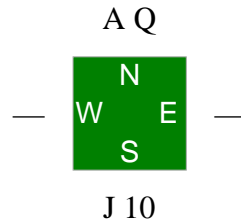# The Dog Didn't Bark

A Q

```
      N
  W       E
      S
```

—   —

J 10

You're all pretty experienced bridge players, and I am sure you are familiar with the principle of a finesse. So, when I show you this suit combination and I ask what is the likelihood of scoring 2 tricks in this suit with South on play, my guess is you would all say "50-50".
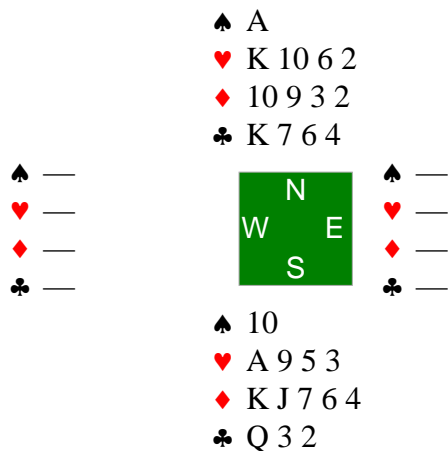
That was the answer I got when I posed that very question at my very first face-to-face "Shark's Pointers" at Tim Hill's Westwood MA Duplicate Bridge Club about 6 years ago. So, I pursued this a bit, and asked, "Suppose I play a spade from the south hand and put in the Q, when West follows low.   Let's suppose I do this 10 times in a row. We'd expect the Q to win half the time, and lose half the time, depending upon the location of the K, correct?" And everyone agreed. So, I thru out a proposition. "I'll do this 10 times and I will give you $10 every time the Q wins and you give me only $8 every time the Q loses - any takers?"   I got a lot a curious looks, but expecting a trap, I got no takers.

I pulled out a fresh deck of cards and removed the spade suit.   I removed the AQ and J10. Then I took the other remaining 9 spades and shuffled them thoroughly. I put 6 spades in the East hand and 3 spades in the West hand! Do you see what this does to the odds? Now instead of a 50:50 proposition, it becomes a 2:1 likelihood that the K will be in the hand with the 6 cards.   If anyone were to take me up on this bet, I would most likely win my $8 six or seven times out of 10, whereas I would lose $10 only 3 or 4 times. So, I would expect to win $48 or $56 and pay out only $30 or $40.   Casinos don't even get this kind of payback!

Let's look at it another way. Let's assume that the West hand opened a weak 2S bid. I think we'd all expect to win 2 spade tricks then. And then let's assume East opened a weak 2S bid. Now, it is even more likely that we would fully expect to win only 1 trick. This is basic.   This is why I stressed to you in one of our prior sessions that the likelihood of any given card being in the hand where there is known to be length is higher than it being in the hand with the fewer number of cards in that suit.

But what if we know that the East hand started with 6 spades and values to open a weak two bid, but didn't bid anything. What would that tell us? Today we are going to dig into that question a bid, and see what clues we can take from our opponents' silence. We're calling today's Shark's Pointers Online - "The Dog Didn't Bark!"

The Dog Didn't Bark

```
                        ♠ A
                        ♥ K 10 6 2
                        ♦ 10 9 3 2
                        ♣ K 7 6 4

        ♠ —              ┌─────────┐              ♠ —
        ♥ —              │    N    │              ♥ —
        ♦ —              │ W     E │              ♦ —
        ♣ —              │    S    │              ♣ —
                         └─────────┘
                        ♠ 10
                        ♥ A 9 5 3
                        ♦ K J 7 6 4
                        ♣ Q 3 2
```

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	All pass	

Some of you may recall this hand from one of the ACBL Support Your Club games. EW were vulnerable, and North was dealer. He passed as did East and South decided to make an offshape 2D bid. This generally promises 6 cards, but the spade shortness and partner's having passed prompted South's desire to get in the way. Now it went pass by West and North, realizing that the opps obviously had a lot of spades, decided to put maximum pressure on the opponents by bidding 4D. And now it went all pass.   West led the spade K. So, before playing to trick 1, let's look at what we know and what we don't know. Each side has 20 hcp. It's quite strange that we are missing 11 spades and the opponents have never bid - not even once!   Let's hold that thought as we proceed to count our winners and our losers. We obviously have no spade losers. Looks like we have a heart loser, 1 or 2 diamond losers, and 1 or 2 club losers.   We need to be very lucky to lose only 1 club trick, but if the hand with 3 hearts to an honor also has the Ace of clubs, we might be able to end play him. We might also find one hand with a doubleton Ace of clubs. but how likely is that, knowing spades are most likely evenly divided (6-5). Hard to imagine one hand having 10 black cards and not bidding.   Furthermore, it seems likely that the hand with 6 spades has the A of diamonds. It could be singleton, but if that is the case, we have to lose 2 diamonds. So, let's hope we can hold our diamond losers to 1 and be lucky enough to get an endplay to hold our clubs to 1 loser. We would lose 1 each diamond, heart, and club and make 4D! Ready to go? No, far from it. Let's think about the distribution, and see if we can get any clues as to how to play our trump suit, and there is are some very, very important things we must do on each and every hand we play.   Let's figure out what the opponents are likely to make. Let's decide if we are in a normal contract, and decide if we are apt to get a good result or a bad result. As mentioned, the opps have 11 spades. They must lose 1 spade, 2 hearts, 1 club - and possibly 1 diamond. It initially appeared that we stole this hand, but suddenly, things aren't looking so rosy anymore.   We are hardly in a normal contract, however well-intended, South's 2D opener is quite unusual as it only has 5 cards - and it also contains a 4 card major. The opps are likely to score only 8 tricks in spades and they are vulnerable. They may likely get to 4S down 2. Even 4D making will likely be a below score. Going down will be a disaster!

The Dog Didn't Bark

North Deals
E-W Vul

```
               ♠ A
               ♥ K 10 6 2
               ♦ 10 9 3 2
               ♣ K 7 6 4
♠ K Q 9 7 5              ♠ J 8 6 4 3 2
♥ J 8 4        N        ♥ Q 7
♦ Q 8        W   E      ♦ A 5
♣ A 9 5        S        ♣ J 10 8
               ♠ 10
               ♥ A 9 5 3
               ♦ K J 7 6 4
               ♣ Q 3 2
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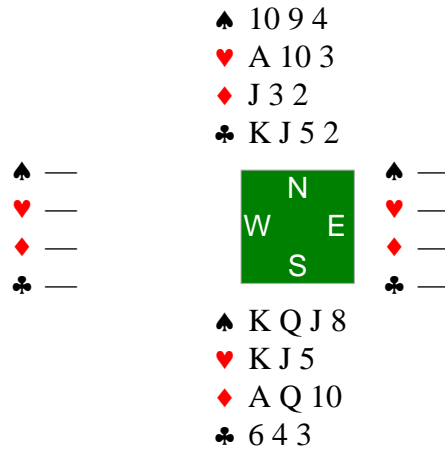
West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	All pass	

4 ♦ by South

Here's a lie of the cards, consistent with the bidding, that allows us to endplay the hand with the A of clubs and the 3rd heart. West clearly has the KQ of spades and is likely to hold 5 of them. East, holds 6 spades and 8 high card points, but his suit is terrible and at unfavorable vulnerability, he will likely pass rather than open 2S with this hand. West cannot have any more than this to have not overcalled 2S. He must be viewing his Qx of diamonds as a total waste of values, and it is not unlikely that he may stay out of the auction. We know he can't have both aces. We also know East is not likely to hold both aces and 6 spades, or he would be even more likely to open 2S. It's hard to construct a hand with KQxxx of spades and the A of diamonds that West would not venture a 2S overcall. Diamonds are probably 2-2 since the opponents didn't bid. On this lie of the cards, declarer can win the spade Ace in dummy, play the 10 of D to his K, and after a diamond is returned, East can win and shift to the J of clubs. West would let this ride around to dummy. Now A, K and a third heart will toss West in and down to only spades and Ace and a club, so will lose only 1 club, 1 heart and 1 diamond. As it turns out, your model was very close. But, after winning the K of diamonds at trick 2 and returning a trump, and ducking a club, when you follow with your plan to throw West in with the 3rd round of hearts, it turns out that East actually started with QJ doubleton of hearts! So there is no endplay. You will lose 2 clubs, but now you won't lose a heart. So, you still end up making the hand. Unfortunately - this makes your score even worse. Because now, you can make 4H!

What I loved about this hand was that we were able to glean such a clear model of the hand before playing to trick 1 because neither the East nor the West "dogs" barked, you were able to deduce that East must have started with 6 crappy spades, that it was likely that diamonds were 2-2 and that the hand with a known ace and KQxxx of spades probably started with Qx of diamonds and therefore the Ace of clubs. We further assumed the hand with the A of clubs had 3 hearts so that he could be thrown in to allow you to lose only 1 club and actually score 10 tricks.

The Dog Didn't Bark

North
- ♠ 10 9 4
- ♥ A 10 3
- ♦ J 3 2
- ♣ K J 5 2

West
- ♠ —
- ♥ —
- ♦ —
- ♣ —

East
- ♠ —
- ♥ —
- ♦ —
- ♣ —

South
- ♠ K Q J 8
- ♥ K J 5
- ♦ A Q 10
- ♣ 6 4 3

West	North	East	South
		1 ♦	1 NT
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

Opening Lead 9 of ♦

3 NT by South

Here's a rather common variation on the theme of "The Dog Didn't Bark". East opens the bidding 1 ♦, South overcalls 1N, and North invites, and South bids 3 NT. The opening lead is the 9 of ♦, you play the 3 from dummy, and East follows with the 8, which you win in hand, and now you play the K of spades, low, low, Ace, and East returns a diamond as West follows. You win in hand and play a club to the 10 and the J which loses to East's Q, and he returns to 2 of diamonds signaling for a club, as West parts with a club. You cash your spades, pitching a low club from dummy. West follows to all four spades, as East pitches a heart quickly on the 3rd round of spades then thinks a while, and pitches another heart.   You have 3 spades, 3 diamonds and 2 sure hearts. If you guess the heart Q, you have 9 tricks. If you give up the club Ace, East will win and cash 2 diamonds, setting you a trick. You have a complete count on the hand. East started with 2 spades, 4 hearts, 5 diamonds and 2 clubs. Had he pitched a diamond on the 4th spade instead of a heart, you have an easy play of exiting with a club, and after cashing his diamond winner would be down to only 3 hearts, would have to give you the last 3 tricks.

Is East down to Qx of hearts or xx of hearts?

This is the end position:

The Dog Didn't Bark

```
                    ♠ —
                    ♥ A 10 3
                    ♦ —
                    ♣ K 5 2

♠ —              ┌─────────┐         ♠ —
♥ x x x          │    N    │         ♥ x x x
♦ —              │ W     E │         ♦ K 5
♣ 9 8 7          │    S    │         ♣ A
                 └─────────┘
                    ♠ 8
                    ♥ K J 5
                    ♦ —
                    ♣ 6 4
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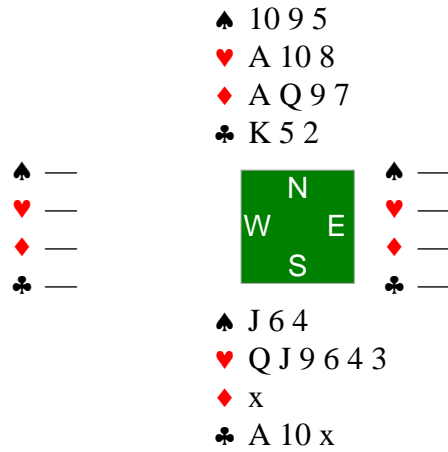| West	North	East	South
		1 ♦	1 NT
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

3 NT by South

Here's the position with South leading the spade 8. West and North pitch clubs, and now East has to decide what to do. Assuming he holds on to the Ace of clubs, he has to either pitch a diamond winner or part with a heart. If, East pitches a diamond winner and holds onto 3 hearts, whether or not East started with the Q of hearts, South will know he is down to a singleton Ace of clubs , and lead a club to East's Ace. Now, East can cash his diamond, but he will then have to lead a heart - giving declarer the last 3 tricks. So, by pitching a heart, and keeping he still leaves you with a guess. Declarer can't exit with a club, or East will cash TWO diamonds and set the contract (2Clubs, 2Diamonds, Ace of Spades) Is there any clue? We know his distribution - 2 spades, 4 hearts, 5 diamonds and 2 clubs. We know his partner started with 4 spades, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds and 4 clubs. Since East started with 4 hearts, and West started with 3, the odds are 4:3 that the Q of hearts would be with East, and East did open the bidding. So, we should play the AK of hearts dropping the Q, right? WRONG!!! We have virtually a 100% guarantee that West started with the Q of hearts!

How do we know this? ....Because the dog didn't bark!

   East started with Ace and spade, 5 diamonds headed by the K, the AQ doubleton of clubs and 4 hearts. He is known to have 13 hcp without the Q of hearts. If he had the Q of hearts, that would bring his total to 15 hcp - and dollars to doughnuts, he would have opened the bidding 1 NT - not 1 ♦ ! I run into this situation from time to time, and every time I ask, "What is your NT range?", I usually get the following reply that makes me smile - "I didn't open 1 NT!"

The Dog Didn't Bark

```
                    ♠ 10 9 5
                    ♥ A 10 8
                    ♦ A Q 9 7
                    ♣ K 5 2
  ♠ —                              ♠ —
  ♥ —            N                 ♥ —
  ♦ —          W   E               ♦ —
  ♣ —            S                 ♣ —
                    ♠ J 6 4
                    ♥ Q J 9 6 4 3
                    ♦ x
                    ♣ A 10 x
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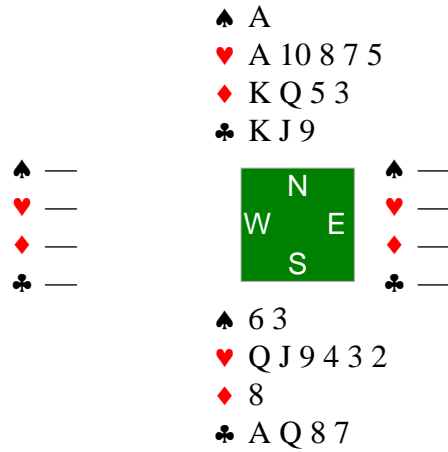| West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	2 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

4 ♥ by South

Opening Lead J of ♦

Here's a common situation. You are declarer in 4 ♥ at matchpoints and the opening lead is the J of diamonds. Should you finesse at trick 1?

Before answering the question, ask yourself how many high card points the opponents possess. You have 11 high card points, and partner has 13. You are missing 16 hcp. Any clues? What about the opening lead? You are missing the AKQ of spades. Seems like a very high likelihood that if West had the AK or AKQ, and maybe even the KQ. he most likely would lead a high spade. So, from the fact that the dog didn't bark out a spade lead, it would be a very good likelihood that he started with AQxxx and his partner had Kx. The other dog that didn't bark was the fact that East passed. If he had the K of spades and another K, he most certainly would have bid, so finesse at trick 1.   East can not have the K of diamonds along with the K of spades that he seems quite likely to hold.

The Board Didn't Bark

North
- ♠ A
- ♥ A 10 8 7 5
- ♦ K Q 5 3
- ♣ K J 9

West
- ♠ —
- ♥ —
- ♦ —
- ♣ —

East
- ♠ —
- ♥ —
- ♦ —
- ♣ —

South
- ♠ 6 3
- ♥ Q J 9 4 3 2
- ♦ 8
- ♣ A Q 8 7

Opening Lead A of ♦   NS Vul Imps

West	North	East	South
		2 ♠	3 ♥
5 ♠	6 ♥	All pass	

6 ♥ by South

Here's a spirited auction to end with this morning!   West leads the A of diamonds against your 6 ♥ contract, as East follows with the J. West continues a diamond. You play the K, East follows with the 2 and you ruff.   Now you lead the Q of hearts, and West plays the 6 without hesitation. Your play? Here's a hint? Did East hitch after North's 6 ♥ bid?   Don't you think he would be thinking long and hard about taking a sac at favorable vulnerable at Imps? Of course he would! Go up with the A and claim!

Shark's Pointer today is listen carefully to the bidding. When a bid or double is made - or not made, when a specific sequence is not lead, are all clues to the location of cards that will be key in your making - or defeating a hand. We have all heard of the dangers of a "ruff and a sluff". Now remember that sometimes the key to success is when the dog doesn't "ruff"!