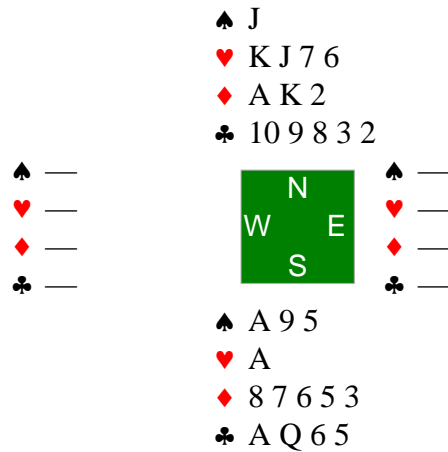


## What's My Line?



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦
1 NT	2 ♦	Pass	5 ♦
All pass			

5 ♦ by South

Over the past several weeks in which we have been locked indoors and watching more TV than usual, it's only fair that we should be using TV shows as the themes for some of our various Shark's Pointers Online sessions. In the past, we talked about hands broadly characterized by "I've Got A Secret", "Who Do You Trust", and talked about choosing between "Door #1 and Door #2" in "Let's Make A Deal". Today, we are going to talk a very popular TV show called "What's My Line" that was on the air from February, 1950 until September, 1975!

I'm going to show you a couple of hands today from recent play, or should I say "misplay" and let you chime in with your thoughts on the best lines of play. I want today's session to be very interactive, so please unmute yourselves from time to time to chime in, ask questions, and offer your opinions. Let's take a few minutes studying this hand....

Our first hand is a great lesson hand. It shows the importance of listening to the bidding. It incorporates the concept of conditional probabilities, and it highlights timing. In the above diagrammed deal, South realized that West's 1 NT bid was intended to show 5-5 in the majors. (It's not the bid I would use, but that is irrelevant.) Perhaps South should have bid 5C instead of 5D, but once again, this is irrelevant. West led the K of spades and now the question is, "What's My Line?" Before I tell you what I think is the best line of play, I want to here your opinion about the NS bidding as well as the best lines of play.

## What's My Line?

North Deals  
E-W Vul

	♠ J										
	♥ K J 7 6										
	♦ A K 2										
	♣ 10 9 8 3 2										
♠ K Q 10 8 6	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q 10 8 4 2		♥ 9 5 3									
♦ Q 10		♦ J 9 4									
♣ J		♣ K 7 4									
	♠ A 9 5										
	♥ A										
	♦ 8 7 6 5 3										
	♣ A Q 6 5										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦
1 NT	2 ♦	Pass	5 ♦
All pass			

### 5 ♦ by South

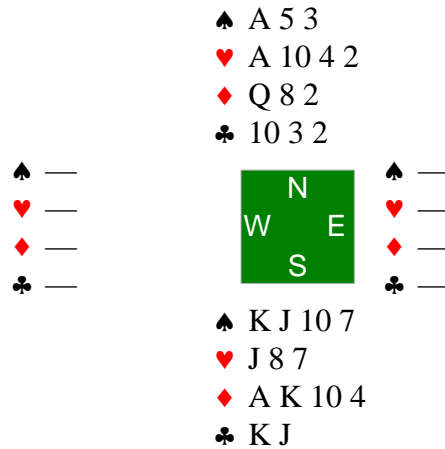
It's clear that we have no major suit losers. We can ruff a spade and pitch one on the K of hearts. We know that East is more likely to have length in the minors. Our diamond spots are anemic so we could lose two diamond tricks if the suit is 4-1. If diamonds are 4-1, it is likely that clubs will be 2-2, so let's start with winning the A of spades and think about our options. We want to be able to play clubs twice if necessary and we want to test trumps.

The way we do this is we delay ruffing a spade until after we have played two rounds of trumps and 1 round of clubs.

Win the spade, cash the A of hearts, now cross to the A and K of diamonds. If diamonds prove to be 5-0, you are down, so let's assume that is not the case. If they prove to be 4-1, you have 2 diamond losers and must pick up the clubs for no losers. My guess is that 5-5-1-2 is much likely than 5-6-1-1. I checked the Math tables in the Encyclopedia of Bridge and was astounded to see that this hand pattern is nearly 4 times as likely - 3.1739% vs 0.7053%! So, with this knowledge, it would make more sense to play a club to the Q now- hoping for a doubleton K of clubs to be onside. You can ruff your last spade now. There was no rush.

The key situation that explains delaying the spade ruff is when both follow to two rounds of trumps. Because LHO has shown 10 major suit cards, it is much more likely the one missing trump will be in the East hand. Now your assumption will be that clubs are 3-1. And West started with 5-5-2-1 distribution. You can run the 10 of clubs, and if it loses to the J, get back to dummy by ruffing your last spade, and now finesse for the K of clubs. You could even play a club to your Ace, and ruff a spade and now play a club up to your Q. Assuming West followed to the first round of clubs, you are cold. On the actual layout, a first round finesse of the Q will be best.

## What's My Line?



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

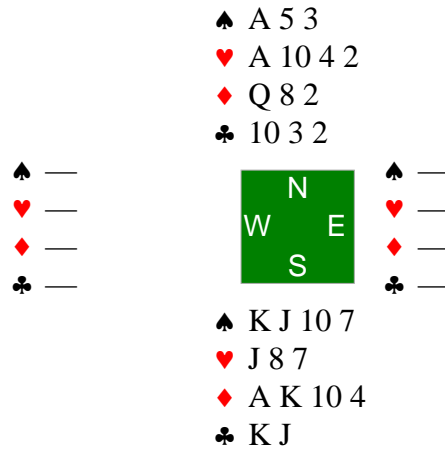
3 NT by South

This next hand is actually quite complex. What I love about it was that each of the 4 suits has opportunities for more or fewer tricks depending upon how either the defense or the offense occurred. The intermediate spots are also fascinating as they may otherwise seemingly inconsequential cards such as the missing 9 of hearts very significant for the offense and the defense.

The 6 of clubs was led, and the first thing we as declarers should do is apply the "Rule of 11". There will be 11-6 cards higher than the 6 in the combined East - South and North hands. We are looking at the KJ10 of clubs, so East must have 2 clubs higher than the 6. The next thing we need to do is count our potential winners and count our potential losers. Potentially, we have 2 clubs, 4 spades, 4 diamonds and 1 heart, but we might lose 4 clubs and a spade. There's no guarantee we have 4 diamonds either. Like I said, this is a complex hand. I followed with the 2 from dummy and I was happy to see the Q on my right. This guaranteed 2 tricks for our side. As you can see, you have a guess in spades for the Q. It's not clear how to get 4 diamond tricks, and there might be another trick in hearts. Note also, like I said earlier, the heart intermediates.

Let's start with the assumption that clubs are 5-3 or 6-2 with the length with West. When I talk about conditional probabilities what I mean is simple. There's only 13 cards in any hand. So if one hand has a lot more of one suit than the other hand, then it only stands to reason that the other hand is going to be longer - on average - in those other suits. So, in the back of your mind, you might begin to assume that the spade queen is more likely to be on your right, it's more likely that the diamond Jack will also be on your right, and if there is a doubleton heart honor, it is more likely to be on your left. Timing is again quintessential, and it is most important to delay critical decisions as long as possible. So keeping all these assumptions in mind - "What's Your Line?"

## What's My Line?



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

3 NT by South

So, let's assume you decided to start with the 7 of spades to the Ace and a low spade back to your J that holds the trick. (Why did you play the J and not the 10, by the way?) Now what?

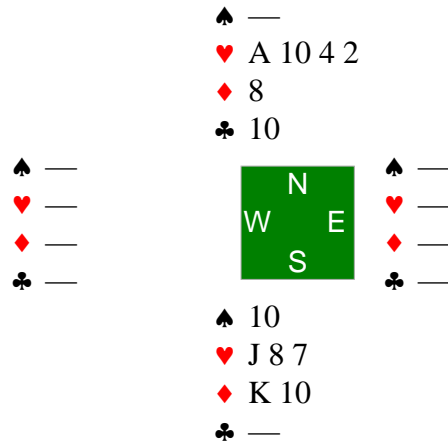
Your goal at matchpoints now should be to win 4 spades, 4 diamonds, 2 clubs and a heart - 11 tricks. There are 4 possible plays - cash the K of spades, duck a heart, play the J of clubs from hand or play a diamond to dummy's Q and play another spade. Playing the K of spades is clearly not a good play. The "a priori" odds of a 4-2 spade split are about 47%, vs 36% for a 3-3 split. If the clubs are skewed in favor of the West hand, the odds of a 4-2 spade split are actually better than the calculated odds. Playing a club now will not hurt you if you guess the diamond position.

One of you on today's call had a very intriguing comment. "How about A of diamonds and a diamond to the Q at tricks 2 and 3- to check if the J is doubleton?" was your question.

I love it!! This sequence allows you to win the Q if dummy, and if the J doesn't appear, there is very little lost by playing a spade from dummy to the J. It only loses to singleton Q with East - not a very probable holding. When the Jack of spades wins the trick, now you can play the K of clubs out of hand. "What if East ducks the club?" - one of you asked. No problem. You still are fine. Spade to the Ace, spade back and now you can cash the last spade.

This will be the position:

### What's My Line?



<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

3 NT by South

It's very important to have watched to see how the opponents followed in both the spades and diamonds. If they falsecarded in one suit, they are likely to falsecard in the other. Now I would watch the discards. Let's assume West holds onto all his clubs, discarding a heart. Now I would pitch the 10 of clubs from dummy and watch carefully what East discards. He obviously can't pitch a diamond, or the hand is over. Basically, we have to guess the diamonds.

This was the complete hand:

## What's My Line?

North Deals  
N-S Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

3 NT by South

I played the hand differently than was suggested. I did play a low spade the Ace and finessed the J, then I immediately played the 7 of hearts to the 10 and East's K - and got the expected club continuation with the suit cleared. I eventually read the distribution and the diamond spots, finessing the diamond 10 to score the last two tricks - about an 87% board!

Not a very unusual hand, actually, but a great lesson hand on timing, camouflage, and card reading. The most interesting thing is that by following good technique we got such a huge result. Ducking the opening club lead by East is certainly not an easy play to find, and I would be surprised if many, if any, actually found it at the table.

Today's Shark's Pointers is that the play of the hand is an extremely important aspect of the game. It takes planning, thinking, counting, timing, and visualizing distributions. Practice, practice and practice and over a period of time, who will improve your results and maximize your chances. Work on the basics. Use simple understanding of probabilities and conditional probabilities - and watch the way your opponents follow (up the line with 3 playing standard carding or possibly falsecarding)

Thanks for your participation and your excellent feedback today!

Hope you play in the Endless Summer Regional and apply some of the lessons learned in this and our prior Shark's Pointers Online - see you next week!