



Take Your Time at Trick One

by David Gold

WHEN you are declarer, your left-hand opponent selects a lead and partner puts the dummy down (hopefully representing at least close to what you expected from the bidding!). I always thank partner at this point, but some don't – I suggest that you always thank or never thank. Anyway, enough lecturing on manners; perhaps I will save that for another article. Bridge is a thinking game so at this moment, you should take some time to consider the whole deal. I suspect many of you have been in this situation or similar.

As South towards the end of a close-fought teams match you arrive in 3NT and West leads the three of diamonds:

♠ A K 2
♥ A 8 7 6 4
♦ A 6
♣ 10 8 7

N
W E
S

♠ 9 8 3
♥ 5
♦ K J 9
♣ K Q J 6 5 4

You thank partner for dummy and call for a small diamond. East produces the seven of diamonds and you are pleased to win cheaply with your nine. It seems natural to play clubs now, so you try a low club to the ten, which holds. Next, another club to the king and West shows out, pitching a diamond after some thought, so you persevere with a third round of clubs, East winning as West pitches another diamond. Now East switches to a spade and suddenly it dawns on you that it is going to take a helicopter to reach your hand. You have two spades, one heart, two diamonds and two clubs and might make a long heart for an eighth trick but there is no

sign of a ninth. You try ducking the spade, winning the spade return and ducking a heart but in the end you lose three hearts, two spades and one club, going two down – let's hope this doesn't cost the match.

Let's rewind all the way to trick one! Simply win the ace of diamonds – forget the 'greek gift' of running the diamond to hand. Now you can play on clubs and have the king of diamonds entry making five clubs, two diamonds, one heart and two spades for ten tricks! (By the way, if clubs are 2-2 and the opponents fail to switch to hearts, you can even try the diamond finesse for an eleventh trick.)

This may all look simple but I have seen so many players call for a card from dummy too quickly at trick one, which very often means going off because they don't want to miss out on a trick at the earliest possible opportunity.

My advice is: whatever the contract, however simple it appears, *always* take a bit of time at trick one to consider any possible pitfalls. If there really is nothing to think about, pause anyway to get into the habit (and you may notice you will be glad you stopped to think!). Bridge is a difficult game and at trick one you can see twenty-seven cards before you play from dummy – that is a lot to think about.

Take your time at trick one!

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