



## Ducking (to Gain a Tempo)

MY LAST article looked at the relatively simple idea of developing tricks in no-trump contracts by ducking an early round of the suit. Can it be right to give up an early trick in a suit contract? After all, shouldn't we be looking to grab early tricks and draw trumps?

The answer to these two questions are Yes and a firm No (and definitely in that order). Remember the words of an eminent American author who claimed that drawing trumps at the earliest opportunity was only right on about 40% of all hands played in a trump contract. That rather contradicts the firm advice given by many a bridge teacher who try to hammer it into beginners that they should draw trumps no matter what.

It's time for a hand. True, it's a modest part-score but it still has interest. South, in match-point pairs, is playing in 2♠, West leads the queen of hearts and East follows with the six of hearts.

because this article is entitled 'Ducking' – that's why! However, without that heavy hint would you find the right play at the table? If not, ask yourself what you would have done had you won the ace of hearts at trick one. What would you have led at trick two?

Let's see the full deal:

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

When the queen of hearts wins, what can West do at trick two? Nothing, poor thing. Declarer cannot be prevented from taking the next heart lead (as good as anything) with the ace, ruffing a heart and then playing on trumps. South has to lose two trumps, a club and a heart but he will emerge with nine tricks and (hopefully) a well above average match-point score.

What would happen if South were to take the ace of hearts immediately? Well, what does he do next? Play another heart? Now East wins and fires a trump back – the defence can cash two trumps (denuding dummy) and cash another heart. Declarer will lose two trumps, two hearts and a club.

To forestall letters to the already beleaguered Editor, I realise that East-West have misdefended. Yes, East could over-

take the queen of hearts at trick one with his king. If South wins with the ace of hearts (if he ducks, East plays a trump) and plays another heart back, East can take the nine of hearts and switch to trumps. And no, I do not believe that this sort of defence can readily be found at the table.

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Here's another example in similar vein. This time (for a change) I will give you the whole deal from the outset and also include the bidding, thus neatly illuminating why this author is only employed to write articles on card-play . . .

**Deal 1**  
South plays in 2♠.  
West leads the ♥Q.

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

Now, it's obvious to let the heart queen hold the trick. Why is it obvious? Well,

**Deal 2**  
South plays in 3♠. West leads the ♦Q.

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

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♦
Dble	3♠	All Pass	

How can declarer make 3♠? Well, it doesn't take Holmes and Watson to deduce what the answer must be – but you really have to see why. As you will have guessed (sorry, deduced), South must duck the queen of diamonds at trick one or suffer defeat. What do the defenders do now? Play three rounds of trumps? Now declarer simply sets up the clubs by

**Congratulations to John Phalp who has just retired as Treasurer at Welwyn Garden City Bridge Club, after twenty-six years in the job. Is such long tenure a record?**

leading the king and his losing diamond gets thrown on dummy's long suit. If the defence don't play trumps, South can ruff his third diamond on the table and subsequently hold his losses to two trumps and the ace of clubs.

Note that taking the ace of diamonds at trick one is fatal. What does declarer do? Play the king of clubs? That wins the trick as East meanly holds off, and now what? If you work it out, the defenders have a counter to anything South might try.

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We'll end with a fanciful but still interesting deal:

**Deal 3**  
South plays in 4♠. West leads the ♦K.

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

South plays in 4♠ and West leads the king of diamonds. How many players of your acquaintance would utter the words, 'Thank you, partner, play the ace'? If you do declare in this fashion you will go down – down the Swanee. What would you do next? Other than prepare a few words for the Guinness Book of Bad Excuses that is? Taking the ace of diamonds is fatal – anything you play at trick two has a counter-play by East-West. Another diamond, for example, is met by a swift trump switch.

However, try the effect of ducking the diamond lead at trick one. What can West do at trick two? Another diamond? You win, unblock the ace of clubs, ruff a diamond with that providential eight of spades and cash a couple of clubs. That's eleven tricks. True, West might switch to a heart or a trump at trick two but that will only prevent the overtrick – you cannot be prevented from making six spades, three clubs and a diamond.

We are back to the old mantra . . . Count – Plan – Execute. Perhaps we should add 'Pause' to the front of that as well. □

# How to Play PAB

by David Gold



WHAT IS your favourite form of bridge? Do you prefer the delicate bidding judgment and straining for every trick of match-point pairs, or do you prefer the social aspect of a team game where you can hope for team-mates to dig you out of a sticky situation? You don't have to decide any more, because now there is an alternative form of the game which combines both!

In this article, I can hopefully whet your appetite for 'Point-a-Board' teams or PAB (called 'BAM', short for Board-a-Match, in the US). The scoring could not be simpler. You play a match against another team. When you come to score up, if you have outscored the opponents – even by just 10 points (110 vs 100) – on a deal, you win the board and score 2 points. If they have outscored you, you lose the board and score 0 points. If the board is a tie, you each score 1 point.

This is a dynamic and very exciting form of the game where the tactics are far closer to those of match-point pairs than teams. If you are declaring a normal contract, just as at pairs, you must strive to take as many tricks as possible. Simply ensuring your 3NT for 600 is no good if your counterpart in the other room has taken a finesse that you chickened out of and scored 630. Equally, if you judge that the other table have not found your contract, you may play safe. Part-score battles at PAB tend to be even more fiercely contested than at match-points. This is because, unlike at match-points, you cannot just settle for a likely 30-40% board, which is perfectly acceptable when your opponents have done well. In this form of scoring that will simply be a loss on the board.

The most exciting and strongest PAB event in the world is the Reisinger BAM, held in North America around November every year. In the final (contested between ten teams) a few years ago, my partner and I played a three-board round against one of the strongest pairs in the world. On the first board we went for 800 against nothing. On the second board they stepped into our non-vulnerable game auction at the wrong vulnerability and they went for 800 at the two level. On

the third board they saved at the five level at favourable vulnerability over our making 4♠. So we needed another 800 to win the board, we found the right defence and a third 800 was recorded: 0-2-2 to us!

Here are a few tips for playing PAB:

- Love All is, as always, the bidders' vulnerability. When the points are split, the side which declares usually wins the board.
- If the opponents bid over a contract you expected to make and you think there is a decent chance they will go down, be prepared to double. Even if they are non-vulnerable! You may have to protect your team-mates who have been doubled in the same contract (to tie the board) and if they have not been doubled you win the board.
- It is very important to think how the bidding will have gone at the other table. What no-trump do the players holding your cards play at the other table? Do they play four- or five-card majors? If they are bound to be in a different contract to you, then play safe, but if they are likely to be in the same contract go all out to win the board and apologise to your sympathetic partner and team-mates if that costs the contract.
- I always try and win every board at my table. This is the way I like to play; some may prefer to try and achieve a consistent and reasonable result on each board. I haven't played enough PAB to know what is best, just what suits my style.
- Don't open bad balanced hands when vulnerable!
- Finding the best opening lead, if only to restrict overtricks, is often key. Be prepared to overcall a little light to help partner find the right lead. Conversely, don't overcall on poor hands when you don't want your suit led.

There is no more exciting form of bridge. Try it for yourself and you will see! The first national PAB event will take place in Brighton on Friday 16th August 2013.