

Board of the Week 10

By Dick Chapman

Your hand:

♠AQ ♥ — ♦AKJ75 ♣AKQ743

Two passes and you open 2 clubs. Pass, then partner 2 hearts. Pass, back to you, what is your call?

You can't answer that question, right? Right, because you don't have all the facts. I'll repeat a funny story in just a second. Meanwhile, here are the facts:

It's a mentor game and you may or may not have discussed the meaning of 2 hearts. Your mentee is experienced so you think it's LRDBC Standard (less than a king). You are not vulnerable, opponents are, if that's relevant to your decision. It's matchpoints. Ok, what's your call?

Wait, you still don't have enough information. What's missing? Here's what: is it Board 1 or Board 18 of the match, and how are you doing? Remember that our mentor games are played barometer style, so at the end of each round you know your percentage score (but not your ranking). In this case, you have a horrible game because you (not your mentee) have made several unforced errors. It's Board 9 of an 18 board match. Now what's your call? Decide now, before reading further.

Ok, here's the funny story that was told as true. A player went to a world-class player (let's call the WC guy Tom Smith because I can't remember who it was). "Smith, let me show you a hand and get your opinion." WCP says "wait, I don't have all the facts. Who is my partner?" "Well, I don't know, let's say it is someone of your caliber, another Tom Smith." "Ok, who are my opponents?" Exasperated, the petitioner says, "It doesn't matter, but I'll say they are two other Tom Smiths." WCP says "Well, I wouldn't play in that game, it's too tough!" Bada bing!

Ok, what was your call?

I thought "if we don't get a big score pretty soon it's all over" and shot 6 clubs. I get the ace of hearts and see this:

	♠J10943 ♥1063 ♦82 ♣J92	
	♠AQ ♥ ♦AKJ75 ♣AKQ743	

Well, partner has his 2 heart call, but the contract is looking very good. Ruff the lead, two top trump

(leftie shows out, so there is a trump floating around). Now ace of spades and queen of spades won by LHO's king. Here comes the king of hearts, ruffed. Now to dummy's beautiful club jack and put three diamonds on the beautiful spade suit, contract making. Here's the full deal:

	♠J10943 ♥1063 ♦82 ♣J92	
♠K752 ♥AK74 ♦Q1094 ♣10		♠86 ♥QJ9852 ♦63 ♣865
	♠AQ ♥ ♦AKJ75 ♣AKQ743	

If West leads a third spade after winning the king, declarer can out-ruff East. Now declarer has only two diamond pitches on spades so can't waste the jack of trump as an entry. This isn't a problem: if East ruffs the third spade, all the trump are in, so declarer merely leads AK of diamonds and ruffs a diamond. Now the final two spades are the parking place for declarer's fourth and fifth diamonds.

So was 6 clubs a good call? Recall that our side was desperate to get back in the game. This brings up the general question, is swinging good or bad? Is it ethical? I posted the latter question to an expert I highly respect and heard this reply "it's not unethical to take a swing but only if you have strategic purposes; you can't do it frivolously, which would make a mockery of the game." Also "but remember that most times when you do it, you bury yourself deeper." And "it may depend on how far back you are and how many boards are left."

Some players love barometer bridge and some don't. If you have a good internal sense of how your game is going, you don't need the scores posted. But once in a while it's sort of cool. One time Judy and I played in a 9-table game in a club in Athens. Each set of identical boards was played by three tables so there was a relay. Everyone played boards 1-3, then 4-6, etc. After each round, the scores were put on a monitor in full view. This is the way it's done on BBO as well (unless the director opts out of the barometer method). You know exactly where you stand and don't need an internal sense. Arguments abound on whether this helps or hurts newer players, and I don't have an opinion one way or the other. You still have to play bridge well in order to win.

As mentioned, we were having a terrible game. Yes, we were only half-way through the match, but I still gambled and this time got very lucky.

See you at the club. Or in the BBO mentor game!