

Board of the Week 13

By Dick Chapman

Before I start, I want to thank Karen Proetz for her proofing expertise. She seems to have become the unofficial proof-reader for almost everything we publish at the club or TBH! A big advantage is that if something goes wrong, I can blame Karen.

Many of my previous reports have shown errors, regrets, and what-ifs about my poor play. Today it's a happy story.

North opens 1 club (could be short). East, what is your call with these cards? Decide before reading further.

♠A862 ♥AQ985 ♦86 ♣106

The normal call is 1 heart, right? My partner, however, doubled for takeout. This is dubious based on the value of the hand. Now, with this hand...

♠Q4 ♥1063 ♦AK1054 ♣AQJ

...what is your call? Decide before reading further.

Thinking my partner had a good hand, I blasted 3NT and hoped we weren't missing slam. I got the diamond queen as the lead and here we are:

♠Q4 ♥1063 ♦AK1054 ♣AQJ	D: N V: N	♠A862 ♥AQ985 ♦86 ♣106
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I know where the jack is but don't fully understand the lead. Q from QJxx? I'm thinking Bath Coup. If North can't correctly read South's signal (either the wrong card is played, or I can false card to cover the situation), then perhaps North will continue the suit. Or maybe North will lead a club, not that I expect that. I duck smoothly, and sure enough, here comes the jack of diamonds. I win this and it's looking pretty good.

Count the points. I have 26 and North opened, so visualize both major kings in North. It's the heart jack that I don't know, but I have to chance it. If a finesse loses to South' jack and a spade comes back, it's going to be harder than I want it to be. Here goes:

Heart 10-jack-queen. North can duck the 10 but I'm going to let it ride. By covering, North forces me to get back to hand in clubs, losing a trick along the way. But remember I now know where every card is located.

I take the known losing club finesse. North leads a club back and I take the marked heart finesse for 11 total tricks and a cold top (the field was in hearts making 2, 3, 4, or 5). The hand is next column:

	♠KJ5 ♥KJ72 ♦QJ ♣K875	
♠Q4 ♥1063 ♦AK1054 ♣AQJ	D: N V: N	♠A862 ♥AQ985 ♦86 ♣106
	♠10973 ♥4 ♦9732 ♣9432	

You could argue that the NS pair got "fixed" because of East's double, but that's bridge. Sometimes you are the fix-ee and sometimes you are the fix-er. Or maybe the experts will tell us that double is right, so we got our top legitimately. I'm no expert!

Wait a second. Bath Coup? Is that when you use all the hot water before your spouse gets to the tub? No.

	543	
KQ1098		76
	AJ2	

West leads the king and South smoothly ducks. West can't or doesn't read East's signal and continues the suit. Voila, South gains a trick. Getting the leader to continue the suit is the first advantage. A second advantage is that if East discourages and West switches, East must gain the lead to continue the suit. This gives declarer a tempo. It's also possible East can never gain the lead, and end-play possibilities arise. It may be possible to force West to lead the suit later in the play.

Attitude signals have a purpose, and East's duty here is to discourage. But sometimes third hand doesn't have the right cards (is the 7 or 6 discouraging or encouraging?). And sometimes either or both defenders are thinking about what to have for supper. As declarers, our duty is to allow sleeping players to snore away. And hope they wake up at the next table.

As mentioned earlier, declarer can occasionally obscure the meaning of a defensive signal by playing something other than the lowest card. If you want to do this:

Always, without exception, study the dummy and your hand before calling a card from dummy. This way the opponents won't know what you are doing. What you are doing, on rare occasion, is deciding what card you play out of your hand to achieve the Bath Coup (by obscuring the third hand signal, if that is possible). If you wait until the play gets to you before you start thinking, you give away any gain you might otherwise achieve.

I hope you are enjoying these occasional reports.