

# Board of the Week 29

By Dick Chapman

My pair could have played two boards in a recent game and then stopped. A 4% and a 100% is 52%, and that was about our final result.

The bad news first:

We are in four hearts after a strange auction. Sitting West, I get the diamond 2 and win the second diamond. Counting winners and losers, I see 2 spades, 5 hearts, 1 diamond: I need to bring in the club suit for one loser.

♠KJ9		♠Q10
♥KQ984	V: B	♥A1032
♦KJ	D: S	♦876
♣Q62		♣A1095

Missing the king and jack, how do you play the club suit? Superman can do it easily, because he has x-ray vision. Twelve of the 13 other declarers also have this power, but with my myopic play I was able to hold it to 9 tricks. Ugh.

Here's the dilemma. The opponents were silent in the auction and the play didn't reveal the cards. So you have several ways to play the clubs:

1. The king is singleton or doubleton in either hand. Play the ace then lead low and duck.
2. The king is in South, jack in North. Lead a low club toward the queen, then finesse the 10 coming back by inserting the 10.
3. Same as 2, but lead the ace first (in case the king is singleton), then low toward the queen.
4. Ace then 10 and let it ride or cover the jack.
5. The king is in North, jack in South. Lead the 10 from dummy and cover South's jack or let the 10 ride around to North.
  - a. If North wins the king, that's all...you get the other two clubs.
  - b. If North wins the jack, you have to guess to
    - i. Drop the king doubleton in North
    - ii. Drop the king doubleton in South
    - iii. Finesse the 9 (North has KJx)
6. Low to the 10 (losing to the jack or king; if losing to the jack, finesse the 9 next)

All of this has to zip through your mind before you start the clubs. **A message to slower players:** if you play the routine cards without a lot of delay, you have lots of time to go over the possibilities here. Take two minutes here, if you want. The pros do this often: they spend 30 seconds before trick 1, play the first 6 tricks in 1 minute or less, spend 3 minutes on trick 7, then the hand is over. Ok, back to the play. What is your plan?

I chose door #2 and failed. The full deal (next column):

	♠A8743	
	♥75	
	♦10532	
	♣K4	
♠KJ9	V: B	♠Q10
♥KQ984	D: S	♥A1032
♦KJ		♦876
♣Q62		♣A1095
	♠652	
	♥J6	
	♦AQ94	
	♣J873	

The queen lost to North's king, and a club came right back. Now I have to guess the jack, and it doesn't matter what I do, I'm going to lose. Do you see where I went wrong (besides making a bad guess, that is)? There is a seventh possibility that I totally overlooked.

Door #7: Win the ace then play low to the queen. The king wins but North is end-played. You have played off your spades and diamonds and trump in each hand. North will win but can't return a club. You get a sluff-ruff and the losing club in hand disappears.

So Door 1, 4, 5(a), 6, or 7 would have worked, but I chose Door 2. A very poor choice indeed. Upon review, Door 4 is probably best. Sorry, partner.

Ok, how about some good news:

♠95		♠
♥AK63	V: NS	♥
♦A63	D: S	♦
♣10864		♣

South opens 1 diamond. What is your call, sitting West? The Common Game's commenters suggest an overcall of 1 heart. I passed. North passes, partner (East) 1 spade. 2 diamonds by South. Now what?

I decided to come in now: 2 hearts. Partner gave me a just-in-case courtesy raise to 3 and I passed. You wish you were playing 2 hearts, but you have to play the contract you are in. North leads the diamond 9. Take it from here. Make your plan before you read mine.

♠95		♠A10864
♥AK63	V: NS	♥8754
♦A63	D: S	♦J
♣10864		♣AKQ

Win the diamond, ruff a diamond, ace of hearts (South plays the jack), ruff a diamond, AKQ of clubs (South had J7 and didn't ruff the third club; this is good news because your 10 is a winner, bad news because you know North holds Q1092 of hearts). Ace of spades, lose a spade. Ruff the third spade. North elected not to overruff. Cash the 10 of clubs. Win the heart king and concede the final two tricks to North's good trumps. Wow, now you wish partner had bid four!

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The full hand:

	♠72 ♥Q1092 ♦985 ♣9532	
♠95 ♥AK63 ♦A63 ♣10864	V: NS D: S	♠A10864 ♥8754 ♦J ♣AKQ
	♠KQJ3 ♥J ♦KQ10742 ♣J7	

You scored:

- 1 spade
- 2 natural hearts
- 1 diamond
- 2 ruffs in dummy
- 4 clubs

If North overruffs the third spade, the play is the same. You win any return and North wins one of the final two hearts. There are three losers (two hearts and a spade) this way as well.

Yes, there was some luck, but the secret was coming in with the heart call. East's raise was completely justified given the heart fit and "dummy points" for the short diamond suit. Things might have backfired if North held 5 or more hearts, but everything worked today. Plus 170 for our side was a cold top at the club and a 73% against The Common Game field.

The commenters from TCG say West should overcall 1 heart then East should blast 4. That's some pretty bold bidding but it would have worked today. Two pairs in the local field were in 4 hearts going down, and one was in 2 hearts making 3. The bulk of the field was in a no trump partial making an easy 8 tricks (120) on high cards (1=2=1=4) as the jack of clubs drops.

My thinking on the play was "the cards have to be right or I'm not making, so the cards will be right."

It is said that there is no luck in duplicate bridge, but there certainly is some luck: one NS pair got 96% on the first board and another got 0% on the second, neither score having anything to do with the bridge skills of those pairs.

See you at the table. And choose door #4 when you get that first problem.