

Board of the Week 47

By Dick Chapman

Follow along as West here, then make the right play rather than the play I made.

	♠K763 ♥J752 ♦QJ952 ♣		
♠2 ♥KQ93 ♦K7 ♣A87642		♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	
	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		
South	West	North	East
2NT	Pass	3NT	All pass

Matchpoints, neither side vulnerable. Your opening lead? Let's say you go with the club 8. Partner furnishes the jack and declarer wins the king. Declarer puts out 3 top spades and then the diamond ace and a low diamond, which you win perforce.

Your lead at this point? Time for some more music, this time an apropos title. Did you know that John Phillip Sousa wrote operettas, waltzes and other dances, and similar light music? Here's "Presidential Polonaise," from 1886:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-NYXj9eRww>

Make your lead then check the next page for a discussion.

I'm trying to beat the contract, so I led the ace of clubs and a third club, taken by declarer's 10. Declarer then led a third diamond to dummy's queen, cashed the spade king and two more diamonds (discarding 2 clubs and a heart from hand), and returned to hand with the ace of hearts to cash the club queen. The full hand:

	♠K763 ♥J752 ♦QJ952 ♣	
♠2 ♥KQ93 ♦K7 ♣A87642		♠109854 ♥1084 ♦1043 ♣J9
	♠AQJ ♥A6 ♦A86 ♣KQ1053	

Declarer won 4 spades, 1 heart, 4 diamonds, and 2 clubs for 11 tricks. Our side got 3.5 on a top of 12 (29%) for this board. Ugh. Where did I go wrong?

It was in trying to beat the contract, that's where. Count the points. Opener has 20-21, dummy has 7, and I have 12, leaving 0-1 for partner. I saw the club jack from partner at Trick 1, so that gives Declarer 20 and partner...nothing.

There is no way to beat the contract, so my goal should be to limit the damage. While I still have the club stopper, I should establish another trick...in hearts.

The correct lead after the diamond king is the king of hearts. Yes, this might give away a trick, but I'm never scoring two heart tricks anyway, so I should get one set up before the hand gets away from me.

After the heart lead, Declarer will play as above, but eventually will have to lead a club or a heart. At that point I will score both the heart queen and club ace, as opposed to the one trick (the club ace) I actually caught.

On the traveler, six pairs scored -460 and four pairs scored -430. I don't know the actual defense at those four tables, but it's probable the West defenders led a heart at the opportune moment.

A score of -430 would have changed the traveler to produce 8 matchpoints (67%) for East-West. Here's a question for you: would you rather play 29% bridge or 67% bridge? Lead the king of hearts and you are in the latter category.

Stated another way: "do as I say, not as I do."

See you at the table.