

# TIPS FOR TOPS

BY JANE JENNINGS



The hands discussed in this edition come from 2 different games; Sept 7<sup>th</sup> (Game #20982), and Sept 14<sup>th</sup> (Game #62372). Full results and game schedule at [www.bridgecentreofniagara.com](http://www.bridgecentreofniagara.com).

- Timing your play and defence
- Leave out the last trump

Bd: 6 Vul: E/W Dir: East	<b>♠ QJT643</b> <b>♥ K62</b> <b>♦ 82</b> <b>♣ T8</b>	Optimum NS 5S: +450
<b>♠ A</b> <b>♥ AQT4</b> <b>♦ AQT643</b> <b>♣ Q6</b>	N W 6 E S	<b>♠ --</b> <b>♥ J98753</b> <b>♦ KJ95</b> <b>♣ 952</b>
6 18 HCP 5 11	<b>♠ K98752</b> <b>♥ --</b> <b>♦ 7</b> <b>♣ AKJ743</b>	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N N 5 - - 5 - S 5 - - 5 - E - 4 4 - 1 W - 3 4 - 1

**Sept 7<sup>th</sup>- Board 6:** The South hand is the sort that is often under-appreciated by newer players. Do you see 11 HCP? I see a hand that will make game in one of my suits as long as I find partner with as little as Qx in one and 2 small in the other. This is not a hand to pass or to preempt; it's a very good 1S opening bid - always start with the higher suit when you have 2 of equal length. You expect the opponents will get involved in the auction, but you will bid your Clubs next, and you should insist in playing in game in one of your suits.

In this case, West will either bid 2D or (better) double, and North should not hesitate to immediately

bid 4S. You know you don't want to play this in anything other than Spades; you have amazing support in offence (Spades), and almost no defence against any other suit.. This bid doesn't promise a strong hand, it promises long trump and some shape - and that's what you have. You don't know for sure that you can make 4S, but if you can't, the opponents can very likely make a game in one of their suits. Your bid jams the bidding and makes it very difficult for them.

Bd: 7 Vul: All Dir: South	<b>♠ T8</b> <b>♥ KJ763</b> <b>♦ J52</b> <b>♣ T84</b>	Optimum EW 2D: -90
<b>♠ J976</b> <b>♥ A54</b> <b>♦ K874</b> <b>♣ J5</b>	N W 7 E S	<b>♠ A42</b> <b>♥ 982</b> <b>♦ AQT9</b> <b>♣ K97</b>
5 9 HCP 13 13	<b>♠ KQ53</b> <b>♥ QT</b> <b>♦ 63</b> <b>♣ AQ632</b>	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N N 2 - 1 - - S 2 - 1 - - E - 2 - 1 1 W - 2 - 1 1

**Sept 7<sup>th</sup>- Board 7** offers some pointers in Defence. Most tables played this in NT in the North after a simple auction of 1C p 1H p 1S p 1N. East, on lead, wisely

chooses the unbid suit - which happens to be her only 4-card suit, and leads the 4th best D9. After this start, North cannot legitimately make her contract, but West has to cooperate by taking her K and returning the suit. This is a basic rule of defence; when your partner leads a suit, you play high to try to take the trick. Do you worry North is going to capture your K with the A? Even if she does, that's ok, because when you get in later, you will return the suit and partner will take 3 more tricks. But in fact, North doesn't have the A. How do you know? IF partner is leading 4th best, the rule of 11 says that there are only 2 cards (11-9=2) higher than the 9 in the N,S and W hands, and your K is one of them. But if North has the A, then East has the QJ109 - and would lead the top-of-sequence Q. So if the 9 is 4th best, your K is safe, and EW take the first 4 tricks.

After this start, EW need only be careful and patient and they will eventually win 3 more tricks with their 2 Aces and a Club. But patience is the key. If they take their 2 Aces immediately, North can easily come to 7 tricks. In particu-

lar, whenever Hearts are first played, West must be careful to duck once to cut the communication with the North hand.

For the purpose of looking at defence, let's see what happened at the 2 tables who didn't play this in NT. In fact, 2 players - one East and one West - stuck their necks out and overcalled Diamonds with their 4-card suits. I see no good reason for this; an overcall promises a 5-card suit, and if you're going to stretch the point, it should only be with a good hand and at the 1-level. West doesn't have a good hand and East had to overcall at the 2-level. But back to defence: in either case, both North and South do best to lead their partner's suit - South should lead the HQ and North should lead the C4. Moreover, after a Club lead, South can win with the Q if dummy plays low, and should return partner's Heart suit. If South takes the CQ and then the CA, you've set up the K for a discard. You might take 2 Clubs and play another if North was ruffing, but the 4 wasn't top of a doubleton, so it's either low from 3 or singleton - and 3 is much more likely. So 3D should be set - and it serves them right, because if they don't bid, EW should come to a positive score by defeating 1NT.

Let's look at the defence on one more board - # 5 (Sept 7<sup>th</sup>). Most tables played in 3NT in the North, after W had overcalled their fine Spade suit. Several Easts, for some reason, didn't lead their partner's suit and North had no trouble taking 11 tricks. The first rule of defence: unless you have a VERY GOOD reason not to, lead your partner's suit. In this case, what was East hoping for? Even if West has help in the Club suit, you have very little chance of setting it up and getting the lead to

Bd: 5	♠ K95	Optimum
Vul: N/S	♥ K7643	NS 6N: +1440
Dir: North	♦ A2	
	♣ A98	
♠ AQJT8	N	♠ 763
♥ Q98	W 5 E	♥ JT52
♦ Q93	S	♦ 5
♣ J4		♣ QT732
14	♠ 42	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N
12 HCP 3	♥ A	N 2 6 2 2 6
11	♦ KJT8764	S 2 6 2 2 6
	♣ K65	E - - - -
		W - - - -

cash your winners. And, although the diagram says N can always make their contract, in real life a Spade lead knocks out their one stopper, and they will later lose a trick to the DQ and go down.

Bd: 9	♠ JT874	Optimum
Vul: E/W	♥ QJT	NS 4S,N 4H: +42
Dir: North	♦ AK	
	♣ Q84	
♠ 932	N	♠ Q6
♥ K97	W 9 E	♥ A83
♦ 954	S	♦ QJT63
♣ 7653		♣ KJ2
13	♠ AK5	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N
3 HCP 13	♥ 6542	N 3 1 4 4 3
11	♦ 872	S 2 1 3 4 3
	♣ AT9	E - - - -
		W - - - -

**Sept 14<sup>th</sup>- Board 9** provides interesting points from both declarer and defender angles. But the tip applies to both sides: don't be in a hurry to cash your established tricks. Better to work on establishing tricks in suits that need a bit of work. Start with East's lead. East knows from the bidding that she isn't going to get much help from West. But East has a solid Diamond suit; once the A and K are knocked out, you've established at least one more trick, and maybe more. Leading a Club is much riskier; you don't know which side you are helping.

Similar reasoning for declarer: don't take your second Diamond trick right away - it doesn't gain you anything, and helps the opponents set up their suit. If you do, and if EW force you to ruff another Diamond each time they get in, you will find yourself out of trump - and then with a good Diamond to cash. Instead, draw trumps, and start to work on your Hearts. You know you have to lose 2 of them, but you will set up a 3rd, and maybe a 4th Heart. In fact, in this case, your 13th H is set up in dummy - if you still have the CA there for transportation.

The Club suit on this hand is one that neither side wants to break. If East leads it, declarer can always play it for only one loser. If North has to play it herself, there's a chance of losing 2 tricks, although she will get it right if she listens to the bidding and plays for the K to be in the E hand.

One more comment on the opening lead. Most chose the correct D - the Q, but some did not, and this is not the only hand where I observed players not making the best choice of card. When you have a sequence of honours - such as QJ10xx, there's a reason to choose the Q - the top of the sequence, and it's all in what you communicate to your partner. You might think that leading the 10 has the same effect of knocking out the K or A, but it doesn't help your partner know where the other cards are. Playing the Q, on the other hand, tells your partner you have at least the J and maybe the 10 - and now she knows the full layout of the suit.

Note that the 10 here is a bonus; against a suit contract, 2 touching honours is good enough to lead the TOP; against NT you should

have 3 honours, touching or a broken sequence (eg QJ9)

And, what about declarer? You might think that it doesn't matter whether you win with the A or the K, but you should choose the A - the higher of equal cards. Why? Your opponents know you have it - East wouldn't lead the Q if she had the A and West would play the A if she had it - but East might think West has the K and not have played it. Play the card you are known to have, rather than giving the opponents information that might help them.

Bd: 2	♠ K95	Optimum
Vul: N/S	♥ AK653	EW 6Sx,EW 6Cx
Dir: East	♦ A82	
	♣ A6	
♠ J84	N	♠ AQT76
♥ Q87	W 2 E	♥ T
♦ T9	S	♦ 765
♣ JT875		♣ KQ93
18	♠ 32	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N
4 HCP 11	♥ J942	N - 5 5 - 5
7	♦ KQJ43	S - 5 5 - 2
	♣ 42	E 3 - - 3 -
		W 3 - - 3 -

**Sept 14<sup>th</sup>- Board 2** illustrates another point for declarer. It was played in Hearts in the North, and got the KC lead (see note above), after a sequence that usually included a Spade bid from East. Most Easts did well not to lead the very costly SA - that gives declarer an extra trick right away. After drawing 2 rounds of trump,

declarer found herself with trump loser. Now the right move here: leave that trump out. It's going to take a trick sometime; don't waste 2 of your trumps to drive it out. This is especially true on this hand, since the Q is in the West hand, which is the dangerous opponent for you. What do I mean? If West leads a Spade through your Kxx, you risk losing 2 S tricks to go along with your losing Club and trump. And West should do that even if her partner hadn't bid Spades, because there is only one more possible Club trick available. North's best chance is to play on Diamonds after the 2 rounds of trump. If the opponent with the last trump also has 3 Diamonds, declarer's losing Club can get pitched on the 4th round of Diamonds - even if it's getting ruffed, it's a loser-on-loser play. Alas, today that doesn't work, and you will only make 3, unless you have x-ray vision and played for the H10 to be singleton. Sometimes the satisfaction has to come from knowing you did your best, even if it doesn't work.

I include board 7 from Sept 14<sup>th</sup> because it illustrates a similar situation. The board was played in Spades from the South with a DK lead. Making a plan, South sees 3 Diamond losers, but with a singleton in dummy, she can hope to ruff 2 of them with the 2 small trump,. There are 2 Heart losers you can't do anything about, and

Bd: 7	♠ AKT2	Optimum
Vul: All	♥ QT84	NS 4S: +620
Dir: South	♦ 5	
	♣ AJ84	
♠ 64	N	♠ QJ7
♥ J532	W 7 E	♥ AK6
♦ KQJT2	S	♦ 864
♣ K7		♣ 9532
14	♠ 9853	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N
10 HCP 10	♥ 97	N 2 - 1 4 2
6	♦ A973	S 2 - 1 4 2
	♣ QT6	E - - - -
		W - - - -

the Club situation depends only on the position of the K. Of course, you need to play Clubs from the hand, and start with a high one so that you can repeat the finesse if it succeeds - you have a limited number of entries to your hand.

Looking at the trump suit, you expect to have 1 loser, unless the QJ are doubleton, so go ahead and take the AK and leave the last one out. Now here's the pointer for the defence: if you are the opponent with the last remaining trump, and you get the lead in another suit (here, Hearts) use your trump to pull 2 of declarer's. The same reason that tells declarer NOT to pull your past trump, is the reason it's good for you to do so. She's planning to ruff 2 Diamonds in dummy; take one out and she will remain with 2 D losers in hand.