

**Mentor/Mentee game**  
**12-Dec-2023**  
**Mentor Discussion**

Comments from Michael Lavine on the Unit 191 December 12  
mentor/mentee game.

**Board 2.** East deals. NS vulnerable.

	North	
	♠ KQ4	
	♥ K52	
	♦ QJ	
	♣ AQJ75	
West		East
♠ 9862		♠ T75
♥ QT874		♥ J
♦ K7		♦ T9653
♣ T6		♣ 9842
	South	
	♠ AJ3	
	♥ A963	
	♦ A842	
	♣ K3	

EW will pass throughout and NS will bid. At our table the bidding went 1N-6N and I imagine the bidding was similar at other tables. Every table reached 6 NT. West has a natural lead of a heart. South can count 11 tricks, assuming clubs don't break 5-1. How can South find a 12th trick? The answer is that the DQJ can provide a trick. South can win the opening lead in dummy and lead a diamond. Even if it loses, South now has 12 tricks. In our game, 5 pairs made 12 tricks and 6 pairs made only 11 tricks. I imagine the pairs who made 11 tricks cashed their winners in the other suits before tackling diamonds. By cashing their outside

winner, they set up winners that EW could cash when EW won the DK. The lesson: be wary of cashing your winners before you tackle a suit in which you may have to lose the lead.

Compare board 2 with board 7, below.

**Board 7.** South deals. Both vulnerable.

	North	
	♠ T43	
	♥ 7543	
	♦ Q9654	
	♣ 9	
West		East
♠ AQ2		♠ K8
♥ KJ		♥ Q8
♦ AJ8		♦ T732
♣ AK854		♣ QJ732
	South	
	♠ J9765	
	♥ AT962	
	♦ K	
	♣ T6	

NS will pass throughout. West has a balanced 22 HCP and many Wests will open 2C, planning to rebid 2N. A few Wests may discount the HJ because it's in a doubleton, so they may open 2N. In any case, West should show a balanced hand with about 21-22 points and EW should reach 3NT. North has an appealing lead of a low diamond. South plays DK and West wins DA. West can count 9 tricks: 3 spades, a diamond, and 5 clubs. It looks like West can also set up another trick in hearts and another trick in diamonds, using the jack and ten. But West must be careful not to set up the heart trick immediately, lest NS be able to run hearts when they win the DQ. If West establishes the diamond trick first

then the heart trick can be established later.

The lesson here is similar to that on board 2: it's usually better not to give up control of outside suits before you try to establish your winners. In our game every EW that played in notrump made 11 tricks.

**Board 6.** East deals. EW vulnerable.

	North	
	♠AK7	
	♥Q94	
	♦QT74	
	♣975	
West		East
♠QJ432		♠9
♥AKJT7		♥8532
♦K8		♦AJ52
♣6		♣AK82
	South	
	♠T865	
	♥6	
	♦963	
	♣QJT43	

With 12 HCP, a singleton, and 3 quick tricks, East has a clear opening bid. East should open 1D and not 1C because, over the anticipated 1S response from West, East can rebid 2C. Sure enough, the bidding goes 1D-1S; 2C. West is strong enough to bid game. Most pairs play Fourth Suit Forcing to game, so West will bid 2H. 2H does not show hearts; it is merely a game forcing bid and could be artificial. On this particular hand, though, East has four hearts and can raise, even though West might not have a real heart suit. But West does have a real heart suit, so raises to

4H. North's natural lead is SK, but West bid spades so North might choose a different lead. But whatever North leads, West sees that the only losers are spades and possibly a heart. What can be done about the spade losers? One can go away on a club, but the others can go away only if they're ruffed. So West's plan should be to use dummy's little trumps to ruff spades. If West pulls trump right away, then dummy will not have enough trump left to ruff spades. So, West should delay pulling trump and use East's hearts first for ruffing. West should lead a spade, if North hasn't already done that, and then try to ruff spades. West will need entries for leading spades. The entries could be the DK, a club ruff, and possibly one high heart. On this hand the SAK fall after two ruffs and the rest of West's spades are good. Every EW pair in our game reached a heart contract but they made either 9, 10, or 11 tricks. I suspect the difference lies in how many spades they were able to ruff. A slight variation is that North may lead a spade honor that shows N also holds the other spade honor. In that case West may infer that North has the other honor and may take a ruffing finesse through North.