

MALENY CONTRACT BRIDGE CLUB

This is the Number 15 bridge article for members of our club.

Last Week's Problem

You are South.

South Deals	♠ K Q 5									
None Vul	♥ Q 9 5									
	♦ 6 2									
	♣ A 8 7 6 2									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S	
	N									
W		E								
	S									
	♠ A 9 8 6 4 3 2									
	♥ 7									
	♦ K 4									
	♣ K 5 4									
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>							
			1 ♠							
2 ♥	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠							
All pass										
			Lead: ♥ A							

After West's A♥ wins the first trick, West leads the 7♠ and East follows with the 10♠. How do you play to give yourself the best chance to make your contract?

You have 9 top tricks (7 spades and 2 clubs). The tenth trick could come from the K♦ if East has the A♦. You just lead a diamond from North and play the K♦ if East plays low. What if West has the A♦ (likely from the bidding)? Is there any other source of the tenth trick? Clubs could split 3-2 and you may be able to establish North's long clubs to discard South's diamonds. The trouble is that you must establish the clubs without letting East get the lead or East could and probably would lead a diamond and the opponents would get 4 tricks before you can discard the diamonds on the long clubs. Can we set up the clubs without East getting the lead?

There are a couple of ways we could try to keep East off lead.

1. Win trick 2 with South's A♠ and trick 3 with North's K♠. Lead the 2♣ from North and if East plays 3♣ we could cover with the 4♣, forcing West to win the club trick. Now we can set up the clubs if they are 3-2 without East gaining the lead and discard South's 2 diamonds on the long clubs. West would do best to take his A♦ to avoid letting us have an overtrick, but the contract would be secure.

This has the extra benefit that if West's club is a singleton, he is endplayed. A heart lead lets us establish the Q♥, assuming West has the K♥. A diamond lead and the K♦ wins now or later.

However, if East plays anything apart from the 3♣ when you lead the 2♣ from North, you should play the K♣, since it is likely East will win the trick if you play the 4♣.

Now lead the 4♣ from South. If West plays the Q♣, play low in dummy. West must win the trick and again you can establish North's clubs without East gaining the lead and you make at least 10 tricks.

If West doesn't play the top club on the second round of clubs, you should play A♣ from North, since, if you duck, East is likely to win the trick. The final chance is that West started with 3 clubs. If so, West must win the third round of clubs and you are again safe. Your Q♣ in North's hand is an entry to North's long clubs.

This play will succeed much of the time when clubs split 3-2. However, there is an alternative that is better.

2. Who do we think has the K♥? It is almost certainly West because of his 2♥ bid and because he didn't continue hearts at trick 2. Win the second trick (when West led a small spade) in North's hand with the K♠. Then lead the Q♥ from North. Assuming East plays low because he does not have the K♥, discard the 4♣ on the Q♥. West wins the trick, but you can now draw the last trump and establish North's clubs to discard diamond(s) if clubs are 3-2.

In the extremely unlikely event that East has the K♥, trump it and lead a spade to North's Q♠. Make sure you retain the 2, 3 or 4 of spades in South's hand, since you may need the 5♠ in North's hand as an entry. You now have two choices.

The first choice is to play the clubs as in option 1 above and hope to lose a club trick to West. The 5♠ is an entry to North if needed.

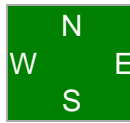
The second choice is to lead the 9♥ from North and hope East cannot or does not cover, in which case you discard the 4♣ and continue as before.

If East plays 10♥ or J♥ on North's 9♥, you must trump again. Then play the K♣ from South, then a small club from South. Duck in North's hand if West plays the Q♣ as before or win with the A♣ otherwise. Lead a third club from North and hope West started with 3 clubs and wins this trick.

The key to this hand was to find an avoidance play to keep East off lead. East was the danger hand. The contract can be made if East doesn't get the lead (and clubs are 3-2). There were plays within the club suit in option 1 as attempts to avoid giving East the lead. In option 2, the inevitable club loser was traded for the heart loser, almost certainly to West. This strategy of exchanging losers from one suit to another for some advantage is called a loser on loser play and is this week's theme.

In the following hands, as usual with play by declarer, you are South and your aim is to make your contract, without regard for overtricks or extra undertricks. Consider this hand.

West Deals ♠ 9 6
 None Vul ♥ 8 7 3
 ♦ K 7 3
 ♣ A J 9 8 2



♠ 8 7 2
 ♥ A K Q J 5 4
 ♦ A 6 5
 ♣ 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♠	Pass	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	4 ♥	All pass	

Lead: ♠ A

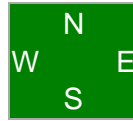
West leads A♠ and East plays 10♠. West continues with K♠ and East plays 3 ♠. West now leads Q♠. What is your plan?

You have 9 top tricks (6 hearts, 2 diamonds and 1 club). Your tenth could come from trumping the Q♠ in North's hand. You could try trumping the Q♠ with the 8♥, but East will have no spades left (West should have 6 spades for his bid and East's high-low in spades should show 2). Unless he is missing both 10♥ and 9♥ he will be able to overtrump. You have no way to avoid a diamond loser later. You will go down. Is there anything better?

Suppose you discard the 3♦ on West's Q♠ (loser on loser). You will lose the third trick. Whatever West leads, you will be able to win the fourth trick, draw two rounds of trumps, play K♦ and A♦ and lead the 6♦ from South, trumping with the 8♥ in North's hand. This will succeed unless West started with 3 hearts and fewer than 3 diamonds. West would then be able to trump the third round of diamonds ahead of dummy. This will happen far less often than East being unable to overtrump North's 8♥, so the loser on loser play is safer than trumping at trick 3. The loser on loser play had the effect of converting a very likely overtrump by the opponents to a much safer play.

Here is another hand:

South Deals ♠ 9 8 4 2
 None Vul ♥ A 5 2
 ♦ A K 7
 ♣ 7 4 3



♠ A K Q 6 3
 ♥ K 8 3
 ♦ Q 8 2
 ♣ 6 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♠
2 ♣	3 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			

Lead: ♣ K

West leads the K♣ and East wins the A♣ and returns the 10♣ to West's J♣. West now leads the Q♣ and East trumps with the 10♠. Plan your play.

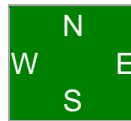
You have 10 top tricks unless trumps break 4-0 (5 spade tricks, 2 heart tricks and 3 diamond tricks). Suppose you overtrump East's 10♠ with your Q♠. If West has the remaining 3 spades, you will have to lose a spade trick to West's J♠ and also a heart trick. Your 5 spade trump tricks will become 4.

Instead of overtrumping, South should discard the 3♥ on the third trick (loser on a loser). East will win this trick, but you can win whatever he leads, draw trumps in up to 3 rounds and take your 10 tricks.

Note that East trumped his partner's trick at trick 3. His idea was to try to promote a possible trump trick in West's hand. He would have succeeded if you had overtrumped.

Another hand.

South Deals ♠ —
 E-W Vul ♥ K Q 10 8 4 3 2
 ♦ A 8 4
 ♣ 9 7 3



♠ K 8
 ♥ A J 9 7 6
 ♦ K 5 3
 ♣ A 5 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♥
1 ♠	4 ♥	4 ♠	Pass
Pass	5 ♥	All pass	

Lead: ♠ Q

Plan your play.

You have 10 top tricks (7 hearts, 1 diamonds and 2 clubs). If you trump the first trick in the North hand and draw the opponent's trump you will still have 10 tricks. You will lose 2 diamond tricks and 1 club trick and go 1 down.

Instead of trumping the spade lead, you should discard a small club or a small diamond. East will win the A♠, but you will be able to discard another minor suit loser on the K♠ and only lose 2 tricks, making the contract. The K♠ becomes your eleventh trick. One last hand.

West Deals ♠ A J 9
 None Vul ♥ 4 3 2
 ♦ A Q 7
 ♣ A 8 3 2



♠ K Q 10 7
 ♥ 9
 ♦ K J 9 2
 ♣ K 9 7 4

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	Dbl	3 ♥	4 ♠
All pass			

Lead: ♥ K

North feels he is too strong to pass and a takeout double is his only viable bid. South pictures North as likely to have 4 spades for his double and plays in 4 ♠ with a 4-3 fit. It turns out to be the only game contract with any likelihood of success.

West K♥ wins the first trick. West continues with Q♥. What is your plan?

You have 10 top tricks (4 spades, 4 diamonds and 2 clubs). However your trump position may be problematic unless trumps break 3-3. If you trump the second trick and draw 3 rounds of trumps and they turn out to be split 4-2, the opponents will still have a trump left and you will have none. When you cash your diamonds and clubs, an opponent will likely trump and the opponents will be able to take heart tricks to defeat the contract.

The solution is to discard a small club from South's hand at trick 2 and another small club at trick 3 if the opponents lead a third heart. Now North's high trump can trump a fourth round and South's four trumps will be intact. Win whatever West leads and draw trumps in 4 rounds. If trumps are 3-3 or 4-2, you will be able to take your minor suit tricks without interference from the opponents and make your contract. You will have maintained trump control. Of course, if trumps are 5-1 or 6-0, you will still go down, but you were powerless in that case.

With the start of returning to play next week, this will be the last of these COVID-19 bridge articles.