

Learning Points – Plan Your Play Then Play Your Plan

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by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

E Deals

♠ K9752

Both Vul

♥ Q108

♦ 74

Mike

♣ 1095

Steve

♠ AJ10

N

♠ 94

♥ 5432

W 10 E

♥ KJ976

♦ Q3

S

♦ AK1095

♣ J743

♣ Q

♠ Q63

♥ A

♦ J862

♣ AK862

Duplimate:

NS: 1♠, 2♣

EW: 1N, 3♦,

4♥

There are a number of ways to plan your attack as declarer on a hand like this. Look for clues in the fall of the cards and adjust as you go.

The Bidding

Since Mike and I play Precision, we use 5 card majors and a limited 1-bid opening 11-15 HCP. West's response is based on 8-10 HCP and trump support. In a competitive auction like this one, East can bid a 5-5 pattern to the three level showing offensive not defensive strength, and inviting game if partner's points are all working.

Because Standard and 2/1 Game Force opening one bids span a larger range, responder's range is larger, usually 5-10 HCP (I've played with strong players who insist on responding with 4 HCP). Since the support raise can be as weak as 5 HCP, standard bidders will find the 3♦ call too risky to make on 13 HCP, of which only 11 are working points. The ♣Q became a worthless singleton when South overcalled 2♣.

East	South	West	North
1H	2C	2H	Pass
3D	Pass	4H	Pass
	Passed Out		

South led the ♣A

West figured us for no more than 2 black suit losers and one red suit loser (Hearts). East now had to play up to that assessment. No doubt this is an optimistic contract.

The Plan

Start by taking stock – bidding and lead clues, then counting losers in suits (then winners as tricks develop). Decide where tricks can be developed, and play, keeping track of carding information along the way. Finally place key cards where they must be if you are to succeed.

Taking Stock

- There are 21 HCP between our 2 hands. Not many people will be bidding this game. We will need help to come close, let alone make this contract.
- North's first pass is telling. While many would have at least 8 points for a call by the advancer, I am willing to assume North has no more than 5-7 HCP.
- Assume that South holds about an opening hand, with both missing aces.
- Declarer wants the ♥Q in North hand.
- What about those spade honors?

Counting Losers

East can see 5-6 possible losers: 2 possible losers in spades, 2 or 3 losers in hearts, no diamond losers and 1 club loser. Therefore East looks to find the HQ onside, and diamonds splitting no worse than 4-2.

The Play

The standard attacking ♣A lead was immediately followed by a devilish switch to a low spade. Our opponents are not going to make this easy on us. If South had foolishly continued with the ♣K, East ruffs and pitches a spade on the good ♣J, eliminating the spade losers.

Should declarer play for split spade honors?

No! Declarer should plan to lose one trick in spades, hearts and clubs. An extra spade trick in dummy is useless to the total trick count. Besides East does not want North returning a club at this point in the hand. East doesn't want the defense to shorten trumps.

Rise with the ace and lead a small heart from dummy. North plays the ♥8. What now?

Since North must have the ♥Q for this contract to have a chance, East must decide if North has ♥Q108 or ♥Q8 as original holdings. There's not much to go on here. South's 2♣ vulnerable overcall should show 6 cards in the suit, though some will make the same bid on 5 cards in a distributional hand. If South is to have a distributional hand, then ♥ might well be the short suit. Perhaps there's a defensive inference that South did not try to force East in Clubs.

If we give South 5-6 clubs, then South has 7-8 spaces for hearts. North has 13 spaces for hearts, making it more likely North would have heart length. The presence of the ♥9 in hand offers an additional chance. Finessing the 9 is the only way to pick up Q108.

East played the 9 and the ♥A fell. South cashed the SQ for defensive book and continued spades, East ruffing low. East led a small diamond to the DQ then returned a trump finessing the HJ. The HK cleared the suit, leaving one small trump in dummy to handle the 4-2 diamond break.

4 Hearts making 4 for +420 resulted in 9 Matchpoints out of 12.

Sometimes we're just lucky. Luck however requires planning too!