

Learning Points – Careful When Playing to Trick One

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E Deals

♠ Q932

None Vul

♥ J102

♦ Q74

Mike

♣ Q72

Steve

♠ A7

N

♠ KJ654

♥ KQ96543

W 14 E

♥ -

♦ A102

S

♦ K53

♣ 6

♣ AK1085

♠ 108

Deep Finesse:

♥ A87

NS: 3♣, 3♦,

♦ J986

3N, 5♥, 5♠

♣ J943

Saturday Afternoon October 25, 2008. Grand National Pairs Flight B Qualifiers.

There are many auctions that plead for a trump lead. This wasn't one of them. If partner does happen to lead a trump, that's no reason to give declarer an unnecessary overtrick.

The Bidding

East has a nice opening hand in any bidding system. West hopes for a Heart fit, but finding none, is not deterred from bidding the heart game. East can bid 3♣ for two reasons: 1) Length and strength in the black suits, and 2) to warn partner off ♥.

East faces a small question after West's 4♥ bid. Can you see it? Switch the minors in West's hand – there are sound chances for 6♣!! The reason the question is small is that East trusts partner will take some forward going action after 3♣ with a fit and a slam possible hand.

East	South	West	North
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♥	Passed Out
North leads ♥ J			

The Play

North faces the 1st question – what to lead? One option is to lead a trump. Another would be to lead a ♦, the unbid suit. Either a ♠ or ♣ lead seem more likely to give declarer a tempo or a free-finesse, so North will rightly avoid these suits.

Leading a trump is often right when the defense suspects that declarer will have to ruff several times to make the game. By leading trumps early and often the defense causes declarer to burn two trumps per trick, when ruffing allows declarer to make them separately. Typically leading trumps is right when opponents have a fit and there is a high likelihood that they hold a short suit (preferably in the hand with short trumps). Often leading a trump against a known 54 or 44 fit is a good passive lead, giving up nothing in the side suits.

Here the auction indicates that East has few if any trumps and West has great trump length (probably 7 or more). A ♦ lead is a better choice. Small from Q 3rd is standard.

Having seen partner's trump lead, South won the ♥A effectively collapsing the 2 defensive trump tricks to one. A successful ♠ finesse left a parking place for declarer's losing ♦ card.

4♥ Making 6 for +480 was worth 7.5 matchpoints out of 8 (94%).

Post Mortem

Opponent's conversation at the end of the hand had South agitated about partner's trump lead. While all the reasons in the world support South's point, South loses the argument here. Why? Once the trump is led, South should realize that ducking to declarer will require declarer to lead trumps from hand, insuring 2 tricks as long as partner has as many as 3 trumps – likely here. So you see, it is never right to be overly concerned about winning the post mortem with partner. Instead take time to think about the facts in front of you, before you play to trick one. You can often make a good situation from a less than best start.