

Learning Points – When Ordinary Becomes Impossible

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Declarer Play LEVEL: Intermediate

East Deals None Vul MPs		Partner	
♠ Q64 ♥ A652 ♦ A6 ♣ AQ92		N W 14 E S	

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	1N	Pass
2♣	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠ ¹	Pass	3N ²	All Pass

North leads the ♦10

1 = Invitation w/4-5♣; 2 = Irrational Exuberance

looks best because we're more likely to make 9 tricks than 10 when it's this close. Besides, if partner does have a 0/1 suit, taking ruffs in the long trump hand is unattractive. LHO ponders for a second and tables the ♦10. Don't forget to thank partner for the dummy...

The Play

The ♦10 is a passive lead. Perhaps North holds something in the majors he doesn't want to lead from. At least the opponent's have given you an extra second or two to ponder your fate. You can count 6 tricks off the top with prospects to create one or two more. Getting to 9 looks like a lost cause. You have 22 HCP. OK, we're a full King short for 3N. Now what? Remember to smile – can't let them see you sweat....

Situations like these require unbridled optimism...after all you bid this mess, right? You have only one entry to dummy (at least for now) and need the ♣ finesses to work. Actually, you can afford only one finesse given limited entries to Dummy. You choose to win the ♦A and play the ♦7 to dummy. You then run the ♣4 to the ♣Q and it wins. *Did you strand your ♦ tricks?* You cash your ♣A and RHO drops the ♣K. You play off the ♣2 preserving the ♣10 in dummy. You now have an entry back to those good ♦ and possibly to lead a ♠ toward the closed hand. LHO wins the ♣J. Hopefully RHO chooses the wrong switch. He didn't want to lead a major at trick 1...

Rather than lead away from the ♥K, RHO plays ♠A then ♠J won by RHO's ♠K. All of a sudden you have 9 tricks. Time to exhale. Remember to smile and thank partner. Time to be compassionate toward your opponents. No one else bid game. No one should. We got lucky. Profound apologies are due our opponents for this fix. Both of us pushed. Chance rewarded exuberance – more than it should. 3N making 3 was top score.

Tuesday Evening November 10, 2009 Open Pairs, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 .

You are playing 2/1 Game Force with strong (15-17 HCP) 1NT opening. You hold a hand in 3rd seat that looks like many you've held before. After 2 passes, you (mechanically) open 1NT, after all what could go wrong?

Partner offers invitational Stayman. You are playing 4-suit transfers. Partner might not have a 4 card major if he holds a simple invitation. You look again and confirm you hold 4♥s so your 2nd bid is automatic. Partner bids 2♣, not something you hear every day. Partner has an invitational hand with 4 or 5 ♠s. If 4 cards, partner will be unbalanced holding a singleton or void. If 5 cards then partner's suit will likely be weak (he could have transferred with a 5-card suit, so he's looking for 4 trumps – indicating he holds a suit needing additional support) in addition to holding a 0/1 suit. Boldly, brashly, you lose all inhibition and decide that your control-rich hand is worth a raise to game. 3N

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Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MPs	0.06	2.88	7.94	5.69	6.81		2.88		2.88		2.88	
Score	-110	90	400	120	150		90		90		90	

Post Mortem

When playing Invitational Stayman some like to bid rebid 2♠ with a 4 or 5 card invitation and side suit shortness. This makes the 2N rebid a balanced invitation – a useful distinction, especially if you have a mechanism for finding out what the shortness is.

When you land in a hopeless contract look for the slightest chance that you can develop enough tricks to make it, or come close enough to justify partner's trust and optimism. Here the ♣ end-play at trick 5 took advantage of the same doubt LHO had at the opening lead. He simply chose the wrong major suit switch. Notice that premature cashing of winners can let defenders signal and guide their defense when they gain control.

Learning Points

1. When in an impossible situation, formulate a plan that takes advantage of what's possible. This might mean counting on off-odds splits and on some defensive help.
2. When defender's can hurt you (and you suspect they haven't yet figured out how) don't show them how. Cause the opponent's to make the critical play as early as possible. That way they have less/no information for making their choices.
3. If you fix an opponent, be sure to empathize – never gloat. Never celebrate a fluke result. You don't want to create hard feelings, ever. Foster sportsmanship not vengeance. Make the game fun for others even when you are beating them.

Key Words: Impossible contracts, optimism, critical play early, make defenders guess