

Learning Points – Don't Sleep at 1NT

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Declarer Play LEVEL: Intermediate

Tuesday Evening January 5, 2010, Cincinnati Bridge Association
 Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513)
 631-8070 . Mr. Bob Veverka, Director. Mike & I play Precision.

West Deals None Vul MPs	♠ K103 ♥ A5 ♦ A1043 ♣ 9843	Mike
♠ Q72 ♥ K84 ♦ KJ97 ♣ 1072	N W 8 E S	♠ A65 ♥ J73 ♦ Q52 ♣ AK65
Steve	♠ J984 ♥ Q10962 ♦ 86 ♣ QJ	NS: 2♥ EW: 2N

1NT is a common contract that offers great opportunity if you are alert to the possibilities.

The Bidding

East has a sound opener. Standard or 2/1 bidders will start with 1♣ (unless using weak no trumps). South passes, though overactive opponents might find an overcall or a major 2-suited bid. East will adjust the contract to 1NT. North will not want to balance in an auction where East-West appear to have the minor suits. If North balances with a double, South will bid ♥.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♦ ¹	Pass
1N	All Pass		
North leads ♦ 3			
1 = 11-15 HCP, at least 2 ♦s			

The Play

Declarer can count 3 tricks, with 3 to develop in ♦s and the possibility of 1 more from either ♠ or ♣. A good score on this board might require overtricks. 1st things 1st. Let's figure out

how to make 7 tricks. The opening lead is helpful. Playing low from dummy allows the ♦9 to win. A small ♣ to the dummy draws a curious ♣J from South. Either South has a singleton, or the doubleton ♣QJ. Since a restricted choice finesse won't succeed (declarer is missing the ♣9) we don't have to rush the ♣ decision. Instead play off ♦ tops – perhaps something good will happen. North chose to delay taking the ♦A. Declarer continued with the 4th round of ♦ pitching a small ♠ from dummy. Having North on lead protects the ♠Q and ♥K in declarer's hand – whichever North leads presents West with a trick (Avoidance Play). North switched to the ♥A followed by the ♥2, South's ♥9 forcing declarer's ♥K. What should declarer lead from hand? With 6 tricks to play →

West Deals None Vul MPs	♠ K103 ♥ ♦ ♣ 984	Mike
♠ Q72 ♥ 4 ♦ ♣ 107	N W 8 E S	♠ A6 ♥ J ♦ ♣ A65
Steve	♠ J9 ♥ Q106 ♦ ♣ Q	

Now's the time to test the ♣. Lead the ♣7 to the ♣A dropping South's suspected ♣Q. The ♣5 to the ♣10 is your 7th trick. The ♠2 to the ♠A makes 8 and now for the all important overtrick: Lead the 4th ♣ from dummy pitching the ♥4 from your hand.

North might have a 3rd ♥ and you'll get no overtrick. However if North has the protected ♠K and no ♥ to return, as in the position here, then he cannot stop you from scoring your ♠Q.

1NT making 3 for +150 was worth 6.25 of 8 MPs.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
MPs	6.25	6.25	1.19	7.94	-	2.88	-	-	2.88	0.06	4.56
Score	150	150	50	180	-	90	-	-	90	PASS	100

Post Mortem

End-plays don't always work. They suggest themselves as the hand develops and declarer learns more about how suits are breaking. The ♥ suit split between the North South hands wasn't known. However South was out of ♣s, and the ♠Q can be protected positionally with North on lead. This suggested a 2nd end play. The 1st? - when declarer put North on lead with the 4th ♦.

North could have defended more strongly by winning the 3rd ♦ and returning the suit. That way West would not have the timing for the 2nd end play. Try it!

West Deals None Vul MPs	♠ K103 ♥ A5 ♦ ♣ 984	
♠ Q72 ♥ K84 ♦ ♣ 107	N W 8 E S	♠ A6 ♥ J73 ♦ ♣ A65
West on lead	♠ J9 ♥ Q1096 ♦ ♣ Q	

← Here is the position assuming North puts West on lead with the 4th ♦. While West can clear 2 more ♣ tricks as before, West cannot score the SQ playing to the ♠A and playing the 4th ♣ to North. Now North exits in ♥s. When West wins the ♥K, West is end-played and must give North 2 ♠ tricks or South 2 ♥ tricks.

Learning Points

1. Mundane contracts are always an opportunity if you're alert to the possibilities.
2. Not all end plays work. They are a useful strategy when standard play cannot yield the tricks you need.
3. End plays for over tricks offer great opportunity for no risk – can't beat that combination.
4. Some end-plays happen with imperfect information or after partially eliminating one suit.
5. Defending against end plays – look to take the next-to-last (3rd) trick so you can exit passively with the last (4th) trick. This can often upset timing opportunities for a later end-play by declarer.

Key Words: End-play, Avoidance, Delay key decision