

Learning Points – Anatomy of a Postmortem – Why Winners Win

By Steve Moese & Bruce Parent (Mike Purcell, ed.)

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Declarer Play Level: All

West Deals None Vul MPs	♠ A73 ♥ K ♦ AJ432 ♣ J432 <i>Bruce</i>	
♠ KQ842 ♥ 1098 ♦ Q876 ♣ 5 <i>Mike</i>	N W E S	♠ 10 ♥ J76543 ♦ K109 ♣ Q98 <i>Kim</i>
	♠ J965 ♥ AQ2 ♦ 5 ♣ AK1076 <i>Sue</i>	

South	West	North	East
1♣	1♠	2♠ ¹	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠ ²	Pass

All Pass

1= Limit Raise or better. 2= First round control.

East leads the ♥ 5

shows a glimpse of what winners do that make them top players.

Thursday Evening Club Game, July 15, 2010 Annease and Marvin Comer, Directors. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070. Bruce Parent offers this interesting hand with rich and layered learning points. This hand comes from the monthly Thursday Evening Swiss Team game. During the summer a large number of Mentor-Mentee pairs play together on Thursday Evenings.

CBA players invest time and energy to create a welcoming environment for new players. The centerpiece is the Mentor-Mentee Program. Players new to duplicate bridge play with experienced partners for 3 or more evenings from May to September. This gives new members a chance to learn at the table, and current members a chance to contribute to the growth and longevity of our club. A good mentor is a coach and a cheerleader - supportive and encouraging, offers balanced feedback, and is a resource on the mentee's self-directed learning path.

It's not unusual to see some of the Nation's best bridge players mentoring some of the newest. Wouldn't you feel excited to know your mentor and coach is a player in the top 0.4% (top 800) of today's tournament players? Here's a post mortem account that

The Bidding

"I bid 2♠ to see if partner had a ♠ stopper. Partner bid 4♣. I cue bid 4♠ first round control (4♠ would be Minorwood showing two key cards with my regular partner – no way to ask for the ♣Q). This got passed". [Note no recrimination, no rancor, plenty of empathy for partner, a beginner who found themselves in a strange sounding auction – SAM.]

"I went down one and this cost us 1st place (we finished 2nd). It turns out that I can and probably should have made 4♠."

The Plan

"Let's examine what West needs to have for me to make this. [Envisioning the required layout is an important element of planning the play. – SAM.] West needs to have 3 ♥s so I can take pitches on the ♥A and ♥Q. West announced that he has 5 ♠s. If West has 2 ♣s he only has at most 3 ♦s.

If so I can win 3 ♥s, 1 ♦, 2 ♣s, 1 ♠, 2 ♦ ruffs and I will have trouble getting any more tricks.

If West has 4 ♦s and 1 ♣ (more likely with all those ♠s he has) then I can win: 3 ♥s, 1 ♦, 1 ♣, 3 ♦ ruffs, 1 ♠ and I can use ♣ winners to try to create 1 additional trump trick.

The key will be to get West down to the same length in ♠s as dummy and delay the ♦ ruffs."

The Play

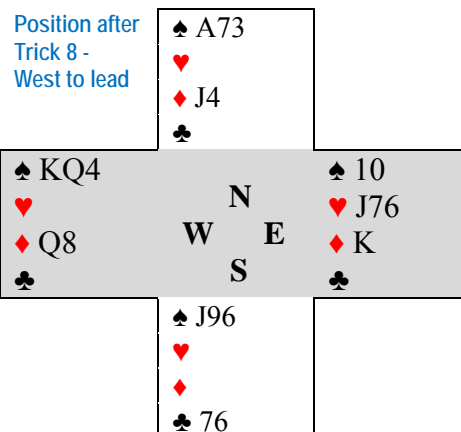
"The opening lead was a small ♥ which I won in my hand. The winning line is to cross to the ♣A and cash 2 ♥s pitching the club ♣3 and ♣J! Now I can return to my ♦A and then finesse a ♣ to the 10 which West will ruff small. However I am ahead in tricks 5 to 1 at this point. West is out of ♥s and ♠s and cannot

lead a small ♠. A ♠ honor is bad as well leaving the ♠J9 in dummy and using up his partner's only ♠. This means he can return a ♦ and shorten dummy's trumps again.

“Now I try to cash the ♣K. East will have to follow so West must ruff. He cannot ruff low, or I will over ruff with the ♠7. Ruffing high has the same problem. He has to ruff with the ♠8 while I pitch a ♦ and now he is the same length as dummy again.”

“I am ahead 6 tricks to 2.” →

“The same problems with leading a high or low ♠ still exist so West will lead a ♦ and force dummy to ruff again. Now I cannot lead another ♣ since East can ruff and West can pitch his last ♦ and be able to over ruff dummy if I try to ruff a ♦. I must take the trump out of East's hand so I have to lead the ♠J! This smothers east's ♠10. West must cover the ♠J and I win the ♠A. Now I can ruff a ♦ with dummy's ♠9 and I have 9 tricks with 2 cards left.”



“I get to lead from dummy through West's ♠K and 4 towards my ♠7 and 3 and West cannot stop me from scoring my 10th trick *en passant*.”

The Post Mortem's Post Mortem

Savor how a top player finds a solution supported by inferences known at the table, and shares his findings so others learn too. There's a whole chapter on declarer play in this one hand. This tenacity for continual improvement and willingness to share with one's partners is a wonderful insight to top players.

Bruce's focus never leaves the contract at hand. He never blames partner (because no good can come of it, and partner made reasonable decisions based on her experience level). He takes the responsibility for not finding the best line of play at the table and teaches us all how to do it, even after the board was done and the results tallied.

Thanks, Bruce!

Learning Points

1. When in an odd contract, the best you can do is do your best.
2. When bad things happen, stay focused. Don't play the contract you're not in. Focus your attention, energy and skill at the task at hand.
3. Envision the hand you need the key defender to have and check to see if you can score enough tricks.
4. Plan your play making sure to manage entries and timing according to your vision.
5. Pay attention to those spot cards.
6. Never blame partner – instead turn the challenge into a learning opportunity. You just might grow what you know about the game!
7. Turn post mortems into learning opportunities. We can all learn from our mistakes. Share the magic of an elegant solution with friends. We'll learn with you and benefit from your insights.

Keywords: Envisioning, Cue bid limit raise, 1st round control, Minorwood, smother play, *en passant*