

Learning Points – Misdefend This Hand with Me

By Steve Moese

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Defense Level: Basic/Intermediate

Tuesday Club Game, September 7, 2010 Mrs. Kay Mulford, Director.
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Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Mike Ma is my partner.
We play Precision.

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| West Deals Both Vul MPs | ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ | | |
| | ♠ AQ93 ♥ A983 ♦ J95 ♣ K3 | N W 20 E S | |
| | ♠ 52 ♥ KJ752 ♦ K104 ♣ 982 | | NS 1♣, 1♦, 1♥, EW 2♠ |

Listen closely to the auction. Partner has painted an exact picture of his hand. Do you see it? Do you see it in time to get on the same page and defend imaginatively to set this apparently makeable contract?

The Bidding

There is a small twist to this auction since we use Precision, but we'd bet you would see this auction through the 1st 5 calls among standard and 2/1 Game Force players too.

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------------------|----------|-------|
| Pass | 1♦ ¹ | Double | 1♥ |
| 1♠ | Pass ² | 2♠!! | Pass |
| Pass | Double | All Pass | |

North leads ♠6

1= 11-15 HCP, 2+ ♦ cards

We disagree with East's 2nd call – 2♠ should show a 17+HCP hand with great potential for game after partner's free bid of 1♠ over 1♥. Many players raise freely here thinking they are simply competing. We'd agree with a raise were it over an intervening suit bid by

North. After North's pass, anything but pass by West overstates West's hand by at least a King!

Partner's double should be penalty. Partner can call 2N as takeout for ♦s or ♣'s in this auction. Partner does not have 3 ♥s because he passed at his 2nd turn. It is possible that partner holds a 4=1=4=4 type hand or even a 3=2=4=4 hand. With 4=2=3=4/4=3 partner is more likely to make the value bid of 1NT. Since West bid 1♠ after South's ♥ bid, this 1N is simply a natural 12-14 balanced hand. If West had passed instead then a 1NT call by partner would show a NT hand too strong for a 1NT overcall 18+ to 20- HCP on our card. Funny how those intervening bids matter...

South faced a tough choice – pass and defend the doubled contract or play a 6 or 7 card fit at the 3 level? South passed and awaited partner's lead.

The Play

The trump lead is passive and takes away ruffing opportunities – partner wants to stop declarer from scoring his trumps one at a time, reducing the number of tricks declarer can take. Declarer won the trump lead in hand and led the ♥10 to the board. Partner covered and declarer won the ♥A. Declarer led the ♥9 from the board. South has the fate of the contract in the balance.

Post Mortem

South should win this trick cheaply and return a trump. Then when North gets in he can lead the 3rd trump and declarer will be limited to 3 trump tricks, a ♥ ruff, a ♣ ruff and the ♣K. That's 6 tricks. A ruffing finesse is available in ♥s for 1 additional trick. How did South fare?

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| West Deals Both Vul MPs | ♠ 876 ♥ Q6 ♦ A762 ♣ AQJ10 | 2♠ Doubled by West |
| | ♠ KJ104 ♥ 104 ♦ Q83 ♣ 7654 | N W 20 E S |
| | ♠ 52 ♥ KJ752 ♦ K104 ♣ 982 | ♠ AQ93 ♥ A983 ♦ J95 ♣ K3 |

Opening Lead ♠6

The Play (Continued)

South judged the ♥Q a singleton and ducked the ♥9 continuation (!????), giving declarer a trick. ☹

This error allowed declarer to win 2 overtricks and score up a +1070 for a top (a bottom for us).

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------|----|------|------|------|-----|-------|------|---|------|-----|
| Pair | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| MPs | 6 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 7.5 | 0 | 4.5 | | 4.5 | 7.5 |
| Result | 90 | -120 | -300 | -140 | 100 | -1070 | -110 | | -110 | 100 |

Post Mortem (Continued)

This was certainly a close double. If declarer plays along cross-ruff lines before the 3rd trump is led, there are 8 tricks for the taking. This means clearing ♣s before ♥s. North owns the 3rd trump and his entry should be attacked 1st. Does declarer know that? Yes, the bidding indicates that South has the ♥ entry so play North for the ♣ entry. (Unless you think South has 3 trumps.....).

Should South Sit for the double? South expected 4 trumps, and overlooked a cooperative style that could show 3 trumps. This is a very close call. Yes, the double seems better than declaring a suit contract at the 3 level in a 7-card fit (anti Law of Total Tricks). If you double the opponents and set them at least half the time, then you are doubling enough. This decision is typical of Match Point strategy. In a team game, the safer 3-bid in a suit is clear.

South also took a view in the ♥ suit that could not have been real. If North had a singleton ♥, why didn't he lead it? North's ♥ could not have been doubleton. South should not fear that ♥ honors would be exposed to a ruffing finesse. South violated another precept about defending low level doubled contracts – Don't play for extra under tricks until you have the contract securely defeated. The ♥ duck was wrongly intended to create defensive ruffs that never materialized. Keep it simple – win the tricks that are ours...

Learning Points

1. Be sure to talk with partner about low lever doubles in complex auctions. Generally when 3 suits have been bid by either side, a double from nowhere is either penalty or cooperative (3 trumps and extras).
2. Don't be afraid to double contracts when opponents are at the limit of their tricks, and you believe cards lie well for your side. Penalties are more than just trump length.
3. When partner leads a trump, know S/he picks a passive approach. Continue unless you have a specific reason (You can set the contract in your hand) to change.
4. Don't assume a specific distribution if partner's previous actions contradict that possibility. Play simply.
5. Bridge involves chance. Here the path to make depends entirely on who has the 3rd trump and the final entry.

Keywords: Cooperative Double, Passive Trump Leads, Managing Defensive Entries, Eliminate impossible choices, play simply