

Learning Points – Can't Make 10 Tricks? Try an End Play!

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Declarer Play Level: Intermediate

Thursday Night Club Game, October 14, 2010 Mrs. Annease Comer, Director. Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Mike Purcell is my partner. We play a 2/1 version of Precision.

East Deals EW Vul MPs	♠ Q8 ♥ 1084 ♦ Q53 ♣ A10853	
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	N W 3 E S	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣
	♠ AJ10542 ♥ Q5 ♦ A107 ♣ KQ	

Sometimes we get to a contract whose result depends entirely on the opening lead. When opponents can't divine the best lead, you might still find yourself 1 trick short. Think endplay...

The Bidding

In Precision, South's hand is too big to open 1♠ (limited to 11-15 HCP). North shows ♣'s or a ♣ dominant 2-suiter in a game-forcing hand if a fit is found or if opener has more than a minimum. Opener's 2♠ bid shows 5+ ♠s and 16-20 HCP. Responder's 2N shows 1) a doubleton ♠ and 2) not sure about best strain (This implies a red suit weakness) or a very strong hand that will bid again. For reference 3N by responder would show a balanced hand with no red suit weakness that is interested in game and NOT in slam.

South	West	North	East
1♣ ¹	Pass	1N ²	Pass
2♠ ³	Pass	2N ⁴	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

West leads ♠9

1= Strong Forcing Artificial (16+ HCP)

2= 8+ HCP 6+ ♠S or ♣ dominant 2-suiter

3= 16-20 HCP and 5+♠s

4= Natural balanced searching strain

In 2/1 Game Force or Standard, South would open 1♠ and North would bid 1N (forcing or not). South would then rebid 3♠ showing 16-18 HCP and 6+ ♠s. North then has to take a view – Pass, 3N or

4♠ could be right. The ♠Q and empty ♥s suggest better to let partner declare in ♠s and hide the big hand. North should bid 4♠ and be happy they reached this game. Notice that NS hold 24 HCP but have good intermediates in their suits.

The Play

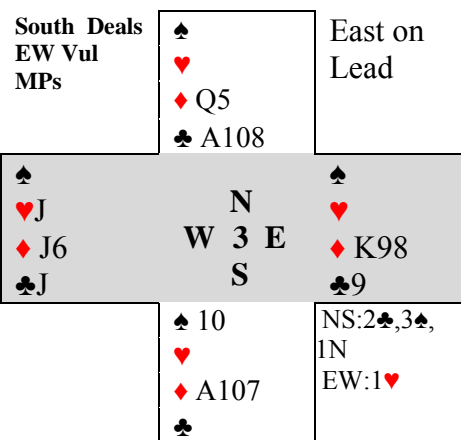
The ♠9 Lead marks the ♠K with East. Declarer can count 5 possible losers: 1♠, 2♥s, 2♦s. Entries to Dummy are a problem. We cannot count to 10 winners directly – we will lose 1♠ and 2♥s for sure. Can we avoid a ♦ loser?? This will take some help from the opponents, not errors in play. Let's find the right conditions for an end play. Declarer dismissed the possibility of a squeeze against either opponent due to entry management issues caused by the ♣KQ with no small ♣ card.

Instead declarer plays along elimination lines. When preparing for an end play you must eliminate trumps and eliminate the side suits (here ♣s & ♥s) – we intend to win a trick in ♦s that we would not otherwise get.

South Deals EW Vul MPs	♠ Q8 ♥ 1084 ♦ Q53 ♣ A10853	
♠ 9 ♥AJ963 ♦ J642 ♣J74	N W 3 E S	♠ K763 ♥K72 ♦ K98 ♣962
	♠ AJ10542 ♥ Q5 ♦ A107 ♣ KQ	NS:2♣,3♠, 1N EW:1♥

Declarer wins the 1st trick in the dummy with the ♠Q (East and South following low). Declarer then plays the ♠8, East the ♠6 and West pitches a discouraging ♦2. Trumps are splitting 1-4, East holding a sure trump trick. Not to worry. We might be able to use that to our advantage. Declarer plays the ♣3 to the ♣K all following (Continuing ♣s here would be a mistake if East has only 2 – East might ruff one of our ♣ winners). South now continues the elimination plan by playing the ♥Q from hand. West wins the ♥A and returns the ♥3 to partner's ♥K. East plays the 3rd ♥ hoping for an immediate set but declarer ruffs.

Now declarer completes the partial elimination by cashing the ♣Q (all follow low). Declarer leaves the ♣A10 in dummy. Now for the *coup de grace*. South plays off the ♠A and ♠J (West's discards are immaterial) East winning the ♠K in this position:



The ♠K is the poisoned apple – East cannot stop South from making the remaining 4 tricks. If East returns a ♦, South ducks to the ♦Q and pitches a losing ♦ from hand on the ♣A. If East plays a ♣, South gets 2 pitches on the ♣ suit. Try it!

South could not be sure the elimination of side suits from East's hand was complete. That's why this called a **partial elimination** towards an end play. South could only eliminate those cards possible and throw East in with the ♠K to force a favorable return. Note there is no threat of a ruff-sluff so declarer really needs East to hold no more than the ♥s s/he already played.

The result 4♠ by South +4 for 420 was worth 5 of 5 match points.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
MPs	4.5	4.5	2.5	0	0.5	2.5	1	5	4	2.5	2.5	0.5
Score	50*	50*	110	-420*	-50	110	-140*	420	140	-110*	-110*	-50

*This match was played as a Howell or One-Winner movement, so the Press Report shows positive and negative scores based on the result and direction at the table. The * indicates EW scores.*

Post Mortem

This hand is of particular interest because the defense must be on their toes at trick 1. As it turns out, any lead but a trump will set this contract because declarer cannot retain the menace position in the minors and still have the ♠K as the throw-in card. Declarer's only chance after a non-trump lead is that East withholds the ♠K on the first 2 rounds of trumps, something that is not going to happen. If declarer uses the ♣A to enter dummy for the trump finesse, then the end position is compromised and West's ♣J will be the setting trick.

Leading a singleton trump might be right on rare occasion, but only when informed by a good understanding how opponents expect to get their tricks. Often a singleton trump lead leaves the defense poorly positioned if a 2nd trump lead is necessary and the trick was won by the leader. When one opponent shows 6 or more trumps, a trump lead can help only when trying to eliminate ruffs in dummy. This is less useful when dummy has shown a balanced hand and only 2 cards in the trump suit.

Finally, squeeze mavens might want to look for a simple squeeze against either opponent in the minors. Perish the thought! The ♣A is the only entry to the dummy so the squeeze position cannot develop because declarer must kill one of the ♣ winners to enter dummy. Give declarer one more ♣ and one fewer ♦ or ♥ and now a squeeze is a possibility.

Learning Points

1. Sometimes you can depend on opponents for help when bidding close games.
2. When short of the winners you need to make game, consider an end play.
3. Sometimes a partial elimination is all you can count on. Do it!
4. Be flexible in your declarer plan. If the opponents show the shape necessary to enable a squeeze consider the option.
5. Avoid trying a squeeze if the entries are not available for success.

Keywords: Thin game, trump opening lead, endplay when short game tricks, partial elimination