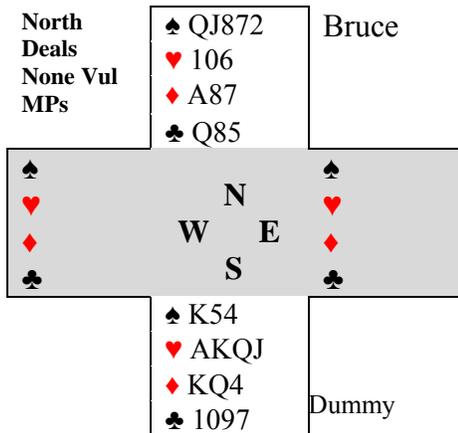


Learning Points – Finally the Hand I Was Waiting For II

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Declarer Play Level: Basic / Intermediate



“I had said I was hoping to send you a hand that I played well. Finally, the hand I was waiting for showed up. (The defense was not perfect)”.

The Bidding

The auction was straightforward. South opened 1♦ in 3rd seat. West passed and North bid 1♠. South jumped to 2NT. North bid 3♦ - new minor forcing. *(Note: NS play the Wolff Relay where 3♣ is a bid that shows either a weak hand signing off at the 3-level or a weak 6+ card suit in a slam going hand. This convention pushes new minor forcing to 3♦. These bids are the same whether the opening bid is 1♣ or 1♦).* South bid 3♣ showing 3-card support and North bid 4♠. The opening lead was the ♦3.

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

The Play

Declarer can count 4 losers with little prospect of eliminating them on Dummy's ♥s. A ♣ switch after winning the ♠A will set the contract immediately. How can declarer prevail? Timing!

West leads ♦3
1= New Minor Forcing

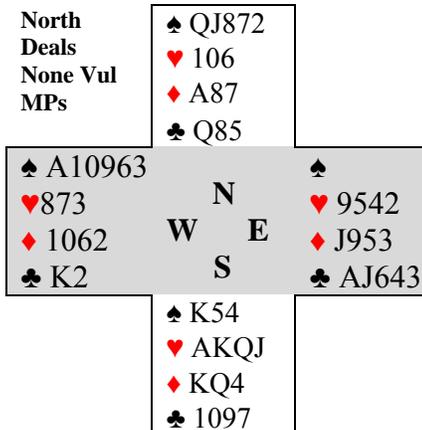
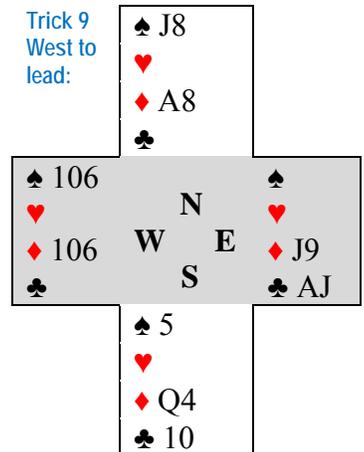
North won the lead in dummy with the ♦K, then led a small ♠ to my ♠Q and got the bad news – East had no trumps. With trumps

breaking 5-0, North decided it was time to cut losses - 3 rounds of ♥s pitching a ♣. Now North led the 4th ♥ and West ruffed this with the ♠9. This was not the best decision.

North pitched another ♣ and West cashed the ♣K and led the ♣2. North ruffed small. North now led a ♠ to dummy's ♠K and West's ♠A. This left →

West tried a small ♠ but North took the marked finesse and cashed two ♦s. It does West no good to lead a ♦ since that dummy (South) wins and leads the last ♠ for a finesse myself.

The defense got only 2 ♠s and a ♣. Since Declarer needed West to hold 3 ♦s and just 2 ♣s, there were several ways to get a similar ending.



After letting the ♠9 hold (pitching my 2nd club) and ruffing West's second ♣ lead, Declarer could have led 2 rounds of ♦s ending in dummy and then led either ♠ or even the last ♣. West cannot stop the ♠ finesse and setting up another ♠ winner on power.

Post Mortem

West could have stepped up with the ♠A on the first lead of the suit and shifted to ♣s for 3 ♣ tricks for the defense. Stepping up with the ♠A will cost more ♠ tricks. However in actual play 2 ♣ tricks disappeared when West ducked the ♠A!

West can also prevail by ruffing the 4th ♥ **low**. This gets overruffed with the ♠7 but the ♠A109 must still win 2 tricks plus 2 ♣ tricks. Ruffing with the ♠9 allowed North to discard a loser on loser and set up what amounted to a trump coup position. Ruffing small would prevent the loser on loser play and also prevent any chance of a trump coup or finesse.

Notice how Declarer used the poor trump split to pressure the defense into a misplay. Running the ♥s (winners) to extract West's trump winners keeps Declarer's trump assets intact. Pitching ♣ losers on the ruffed ♥ trick might seem strange at first, but Declarer makes these pitches only when West ruffs with a trump winner!

A Trump Coup is a form of finesse where declarer puts the lead opposite a trump tenace or finessable holding, has no trumps to lead, and leads a card that allows declarer to score additional tricks regardless of which trump the defender plays. Here Declarer accomplished a strip play that enables a winning trump finesse, limiting West to 2 trump tricks.

Loser on loser plays are often overlooked and can be essential to changing the loser count in your favor as in this hand. How? Declarer simply discards a future loser on a trick s/he expects to lose anyway.

Should West find the ♣ switch? Perhaps ... Partner had the opportunity to double ♦s with an attractive lead. The absence of this double suggests partner holds strength in ♣s or ♥s. Leading either of these 2 suits will clarify whether to switch to the other. If you lead a ♥ initially (safer for the post mortem), partner will discourage and you will attack ♣s when in with the trump A.

Notice if you choose to play **attitude to the obvious switch** at trick 1, East's card would discourage continuation and request a ♣ switch and there's no mystery to the defense!!! Which card does East play? That depends on your choice of attitude signals – right side up or upside down.

New Minor Forcing

Every duplicate player should use this convention.

See http://web2.acbl.org/documentLibrary/play/Commonly_Used_Conventions/newminorforcing.pdf for details. When partner opens with a minor and you respond with a major and partner rebids in NT at the 1 or 2-level, a simple bid of the other minor shows is artificial and forcing 1 round (invitational or better in context). New Minor Forcing shows responder holds a 5-card or longer major and an invitational or better hand, or a game forcing hand with a great fit for opener's minor. (If opener routinely bids 1NT with a balanced hand and 4 ♠s after partner responds 1♥, then you might have to forego the 5-card major implication – you need New Minor Forcing to look for a 4-4 ♠ fit). Generally, any 3-level or higher bid by responder is game forcing. As always 3N, 4♥ and 4♠ are to play.

Opener must 1) Bid the other major simply to show a 4-card suit (forcing 1 round), 2) Raise your major with 3 cards and a minimum, 3) rebid 2♦ with a doubleton in your suit, 3 cards in the other major and a minimum, 4) Bid 2N with a doubleton in your suit, 3 cards in the other major and a maximum, 5) Jump to 3 of your major with a maximum (good 13 or 14 HCP) and 3-card support for your major, and 6) Bid 3N with a maximum balanced hand that denies 4 cards in the other major, and 3-card support for your major.

Over the 2N rebid, better to play New Minor Forcing as a game-forcing shape inquiry. There's not enough difference between 18 or 19 HCP to encourage jumping around.

Wolff Relay or Sign-off

This convention allows a 4-5 HCP hand to respond to opener's one of a minor, but stop safely at the 3-level once opener jump rebids to 2N. Over opener's 2N rebid, responder bids 3♣ (artificial) Opener bids 3♦ when not holding 3 cards in responder's major and 3 of responder's major when s/he does. After opener's 3♦ relay, responder passes with 5+ ♦s, or corrects to the major to play. If responder makes any

other bid over 3♦ or 3 of their major, then responder is showing a long broken major suit (6+ cards missing 2 honors) with slam interest.

When you play the Wolff Relay (or Wolff sign-off – the weak hand only version) you use 3♣ as the Wolff bid and 3♦ as New Minor Forcing. After a 2N rebid, New Minor Forces to game. After a 2N rebid, a rebid of responder's major is slam invitational with a suit missing at most one top honor.

If you adopt the Wolff convention, be sure to discuss how to handle 54 major patterns that are weak, invitational, forcing, and slammish. Typically 1♣/♦ -P-1♥-P-2N-P-3♠ = 4-4 majors game forcing.

Learning Points

1. When faced with bad trump splits don't panic – instead count opponent's trump winners and play to cut your losses. Think trump coup, or trump strip to rid one hand of excess losers.
2. Loser-on-loser plays are extremely valuable and often overlooked by rank and file players. They can cut communication between defenders or as in this case rid declarer of the setting trick. Just be sure you are dumping a loser on a trick you expect to lose anyway.
3. When holding a trump stack against an undoubled opponent, avoid ruffing high unless absolutely necessary. You might be giving up additional undertricks. Ruffing low can eliminate declarer's safe loser on loser opportunity.
4. Obvious Switch Attitude Signals are very helpful and an expert approach to defense. Check out the Granovetter's book: [A Switch In Time](#) for more details.

Keywords: New Minor Forcing, Loser on Loser, Trump Coup, Obvious Switch, Wolff Relay