

Learning Points – An Overtrick in a 1 Level Contract

June 17, 2008

by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

W Deals	♠ Q65		
Both Vul	♥ AQ4		
	♦ J97		
Joe	♣ J732	Steve	
♠ J842	N	♠ K109	
♥ 72		♥ 109863	
♦ K1063	W 20 E	♦ AQ52	
♣ K86	S	♣ Q	
	♠ A73	<u>Deep Finesse:</u>	
	♥ KJ5	NS 2♣	
	♦ 84	EW 3♦, 1♥	
	♣ A10954	2♠	

June 10, 2008 Tuesday Evening Open Pairs, Ms. Kay Mulford, Director, Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 563-2218
<http://www.cincybridge.com> My Partner: Joe Pike

Third seat opening bids can be light. One-level suit contracts are rare and this auction rarer still at Match Point Pairs.

The Bidding

Neither West nor North should open the bidding. East has a marginal opener in standard that many would open in 3rd seat. South has a hand worth considering an overcall. The thin club suit persuaded South to pass (would you?). West's 1♠ call is standard (but a pass in Precision is not all that bad). Again North has nothing to say, and East boldly chooses to play in the 4-3 fit confident that a game or a better partial is not likely in these hands. I like East's pass at the 2nd turn. Bidding 2♦ might be right, but ♠ are worth more. East can always introduce ♦ in the next round of bidding. South passes.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1♥	Pass
1♠		Passed Out	
North leads ♣2			

The Play

North leads ♣2. By process of elimination this seems to be best. There's no cause to lead Diamonds, and leading either major appears risky if not foolish. Were South to have bid 2♣, this lead is a standout.

Declarer could count 2 possible losers in ♠, 2 in ♥, and 1 in ♣. Counting losers in trump contracts helps declarer decide how many winners and where to develop them. Always count before deciding on a line of play, then find the surest line to make the contract. South won the ♣A and continued the ♣5 (this is a standard current count card showing an original 5 card suit). West wins the ♣K and pitches a small ♥ from dummy as North follows.

Declarer can choose to ruff a ♣ at this point. However the odds are that trumps will break 4-2 (48.4%) not 3-3 (35.5%). With a 4-2 trump break, declarer can lose control if forced to ruff ♣ twice. Instead declarer plays on trumps by leading small. North ducks, dummy plays the ♠9 and South wins the ♠A. The ♣ continuation is as expected with dummy ruffing low. The ♠8 is a big card. Declarer cashes the ♠K then leads a small ♦ to hand to play a third ♠, and a 4th ♠ if necessary. The 3-3 trump split makes play easy. ♦s will provide 4 tricks in most cases. Declarer can pick up 4 ♦ to the ♦J in South but not in North. Therefore play ♦AQ to see if a finesse of the ♦J is necessary. EW Making 2♠ for + 110 is worth 7.5 of 8 MP's.

Pair	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>
MP	0	5	2	7x	2	5	2	7x	5	5	
Score	-150	100	-120	110	-120	100	-120	110	100		

Post Mortem

South has a hand worthy of competing. Some would overcall immediately in 4th seat. I don't mind an original pass with such a weak ♣ suit. However a 2♣ balancing bid is necessary in today's game. A balancing bid happens after 2 passes, and is an attempt to push the opponents one level higher. Balancing is not an attempt to win the contract. EW might still find 2♠ or 3♦, but NS have to make it hard to stop at the one level when both opponents bid. The competitive idea is to push opponents subtly so they make the final bid at a level where the right call is unclear.