

Learning Points – Signal to Stop a Game that Can't be Made

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June 10, 2008 Tuesday Evening Open Pairs, Ms. Kay Mulford,
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<http://www.cincybridge.com> My Partner: Joe Pike

E Deals	♠ 43		
EW Vul	♥ J4		
	♦ Q9875		
Joe	♣ 6532	Steve	
♠ AJ72	N	♠ KQ1065	
♥ 987		♥ K62	
♦ 106	W 22 E	♦ J32	
♣ QJ94	S	♣ AK	
	♠ 98	Deep Finesse:	
	♥ AQ1053	NS 1♦, 1♥	
	♦ AK4	EW 2♠	
	♣ 1087		

Often position plays a key role in whether declarer can bring a contract home. If the opponents have winners in a position over declarer's intermediate honors, then the prospect of making a contract on strength alone can be dim. Here perfect defense would stop a game. Signals help defenders find the right path.

The Bidding

Joe and I play Precision. I chose to open this hand a standard 1♠. Normally I would open 1♣ to show 16+ HCP (*The best call – ed.*). I have a good spade suit and values in ♥ and ♣. 1NT (14-16 HCP for us) is also a possibility. Why 1♠? The hand shape is 5332, and the ♦J isn't pulling any weight. I didn't like the ♣AK for 1NT (I like values

Possible Precision Auction

East	South	West	North
1♣*	1♥	2♥**	Pass
2♣	Pass	4♣	Pass Out

Where * = 16+ HCP any Shape, and
 ** = 8+ HCP Bal no stop or 4=1=4=4

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

South leads ♦A

dispersed in all 4 suits for NT) so I decided to open 1♠ and follow through aggressively. Yes, were we playing 2/1 or standard I would open 1NT to avoid the rebid dilemma. South's overcall is text book. West's raise is constructive 8-10 HCP. Game seemed right but having hearts on my left meant I couldn't count full value for my ♥K. I could be facing 5 or 6 losers here, but partner's constructive raise makes that somewhat less likely. (*Perhaps a bid of 3♠ would allow partner to help the decision –ed.*)

The Play

East led the ♦A. Leading from an unbid suit implies weakness in the bid suit or interest in the led suit. Here South cannot lead ♥ without giving up the game-going trick. South continued the ♦K and then switched to the ♣10, hoping to score 2 heart tricks later. At that point declarer could count 10 tricks off the top – 5 ♠, a ♦ ruff, and 4 ♣. Declarer drew trumps in 2 rounds, cashed ♣AK and ruffed the ♦J. The ♣QJ took 2 ♥ losers. Declarer lost the ♦AK and the ♥A making 4 for + 620 and 7.5 of 8 MP.

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		1	3	0	2	5	5	7x	7x		5
Score		-140	-100	-470	-110	170	170	620	620		170

Post Mortem

South has a defensive problem. The ♦A is a standard lead. South surely wants North to be on lead for trick 3, but which suit makes that happen? Cashing the ♦K seals North-South's fate. Better defense would be to play a suit that North can win.

The answer lies in North's 1st card when following to the ♦A. Since North has the ♦Q and dummy has one more ♦, North shows the ♦Q by playing the ♦9 (a high card is the standard right-side-up signal for attitude showing an honor – A, K, or Q - in the suit led. Playing upside down attitude signals, the right card is the ♦5). Seeing the positive attitude for ♦, South should play the ♦4 to partner immediately. North is now obligated to play a heart back. The ♦4 is not a heart preference signal you say? Since South bid hearts, a heart preference is already established. Go ahead return the ♥J and be a hero. EW down 2 is a top board for NS. *East should pass 2♠ against strong defenders. Would you??*