ZIA MAHMOOD

with DAVID BURN

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 HANDS

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INTRODUCTION

I'm not known for my modesty (that's a rare underbid), but I'll happily admit that my greatest achievement has been a lifetime of utter laziness, carefully disguised beneath the garb of a 'serious bridge player'.

I have no intention of changing as I grow older — which is a long-winded way of alerting you to the fact that the articles in this book are not the result of a renewed effort at immortality. These stories are bits and pieces accumulated over the last ten or fifteen years of my bridge career.

If you have read any of these stories before, I make no excuses and I would hope that those that strike a familiar chord with you are worth a second look. But if you're still upset after reading through these pages, you're invited to visit me in London, New York or Karachi and join all the others around the world who are beating me up at the rubber bridge table. Who knows, it might be your exploits at the bridge table that I'll end up using in my next book.

Finally, I must thank David Burn for his input. As a team we have shown the the world that unbridled laziness is mere putty in the hands of a competent publisher.

Zia Mahmood
New York and London
October 1999

ZIA MAHMOOD

with DAVID BURN

AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 HANDS


Destination
1
AMERICA

THE SHRIEK

Matthew Granovetter, editor of one of the best magazines around, *Bridge Today*, once wrote a wonderful piece describing the agony of losing a bridge tournament. In it, he described the terrible pain resulting from hearing the Shriek that erupts, animal-like, from a team that discovers on comparing scores that it has won the tournament. When you hear that Shriek, you don't bother to finish your own scoring, because whatever you have is not enough. If you had scored up first, and discovered that you'd lost before you heard the Shriek, it wouldn't have hurt nearly as badly.

Being extremely sensitive in that department — losing, I mean — I've tried fastidiously to avoid hearing it. I nearly always run out of the room after a session faster than the opponents, and have even learned to score while keeping a running total in order to beat them to it. Sometimes, discovering that I have lost before the opponents know that they have won, I have let out a psychic Shriek — to vent my frustration and strike terror into their hearts.

I'm happy to say that I was doing pretty well with this policy, until the Reisinger Team event in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. First, let me tell you about our team for this tournament. The dramatis personae were:

Michael Rosenberg — a Scottish emigré whose years in New York have done nothing to change his wholly unintelligible accent.

Sam Lev — a wild Israeli terrorist, with a beard.

Chris Compton — a tamer version of Lev with a thinner beard.

Mark Molson — a last-minute addition whom we all thought was a palooka until he won the Blue Ribbon pairs the day before, so we immediately revised our opinion. We also owed him a lot of money from the morning's golf game.

We were a bunch of misfits, brought together by fate with no partnership understandings. How could we lose?

I, as team captain, was responsible for ensuring that everybody followed my example. No going to sleep before 3:00 a.m., get up early to play golf, drink wine with dinner between sessions and, above all, keep conventions to the minimum. Unfamiliar partnerships can often reap big rewards — no understandings, no misunderstandings. This proved itself early on when Lev, holding:

♠ A 5 3 ♥ — ♦ A K J 10 8 5 ♣ A K 9 4

responded 5NT to Mark Molson's opening 4♥. Molson, who did not know what 5NT meant because he and Lev had not discussed it, jumped professionally to 7♣ with:

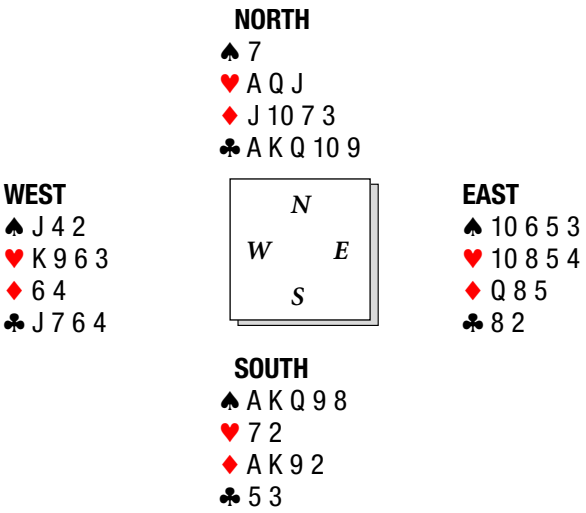
♠ — ♥ A K J 10 7 6 3 2 ♦ 9 4 2 ♣ 10 8

Mark intended his bid to show two top hearts — he jumped to 7♣ in case his partner had some grand slam other than hearts in mind. Lev fenced delicately with 7♦ and Molson, having no idea what was happening, returned to 7♥. He made this easily, dropping Alan Sontag's doubleton ♥Q and his jaw at the same time. You'd never see Stansby and Martel getting to 7♥ on these cards, now would you? Later, someone dared to suggest that Lev's 5NT was not a thing of beauty. "I am not," said Sam, "here to bid beautiful contracts. I am here to win the board." Paired at times with both Molson and Compton, Lev played what I call 'Israeli Savage', an aggressive version of 'Paki Savage'. Basically, the system has two rules:

1) Bid notrump, and 2) Punish your partner and your opponents alike without mercy.

For those of you who don't know how the Reisinger works, let me explain. The form of scoring is 'board-a-match' — that is, each deal is compared against your opponents only, counting one point for a win, a half point for a draw and none for a loss. To win a board, it does not matter how high or low your score is, as long as it beats the opponents at the other table. If you make 7♥ for 2210 while your opponents go one down for 100, you win the board. If on the next deal they make 2♠ with an overtrick for 140 while your teammates beat 1NT a trick for 100 only, you lose the board right back again. It's like playing matchpointed pairs in a field of two tables — no matter what the aggregate swing, you score one or a half or zero. Our team did not score many halves. We were rarely in the same contract as the players at the other table.

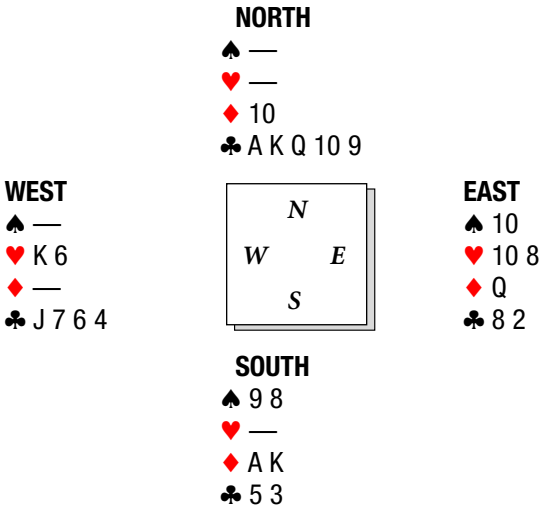
Card play is of paramount importance at this form of scoring. Here are some examples:



After a long sequence in which every suit was bid at least once, some of them twice, and North made a cuebid in hearts, South arrived in 6♦. I led the ♥9 from the West hand — slightly primitive, but the spectators were getting restless and I had to lead something. Declarer put up the ♥A from dummy and cashed three rounds of spades to discard the queen and jack of hearts from the

North hand. On the first round of spades, I dropped the jack. Why?

Why not? It could not hurt. However, I could not see that it would help either — but wait. Declarer discarded dummy's hearts as planned, ruffed a heart, and ran the ♦J. When this held, he led another diamond to his nine. This was the position:



The 6♦ contract was cold, but because of the board-a-match scoring, the overtrick was crucial if our teammates were (for once) in the same contract. You can see that declarer could ruff a spade in dummy to ensure thirteen tricks. However, because I had dropped the ♠J on the first round, South was convinced that my spades had been ♠J10xx, and that a spade would be overruffed by East who was marked with the ♦Q. That seemingly silly play of the ♠J at trick two had become important after all. Reasonably enough, declarer drew the last trump and played for the ♣J to fall. It did not, and he made twelve tricks only, so that we won the board.

Sometimes, there are opportunities to play a falsecard without cost. Here, once declarer had refused the heart finesse at Trick 1 and started to cash spades before drawing trumps, it was obvious that he held ♠AKQ and intended to throw dummy's hearts on his winners. That being so, my ♠J was due to fall uselessly on the third round — so why not drop it on the first, and see if I could cause some confusion? The most subtly effective type of falsecard occurs when an

honor that is due to fall anyway is dropped earlier than it has to be. You'd be amazed at the unexpected gains this can produce.

Between sessions on Saturday my teammate Lev gave me some coaching. He advised me that if, as declarer, I always took the simple line rather than the esoteric, we would win the tournament. That night I had to play 6♠ on these cards:

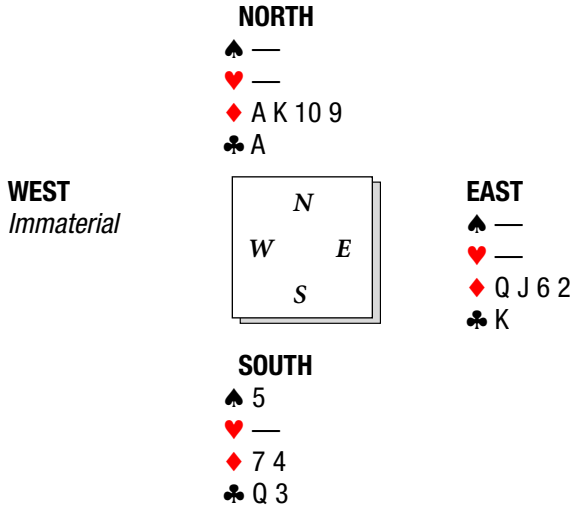
NORTH
♠ Q
♥ 10 7 3
♦ A K 10 9 8 5 3
♣ A 2

SOUTH
♠ A K 10 8 7 5 4
♥ A 4
♦ 7 4
♣ Q 3

After a heart lead, I ducked, and won the heart continuation with the ♥A. A trump to the ♠Q and a heart ruff back to my hand allowed me to draw the remaining trumps with the ace and king. Then I played on diamonds, to ruff out the suit — but East had four diamonds and West none, so I had annoyingly to lose a trick to East's ♣K in the end.

After the session, my Israeli friend chastised me for not first cashing the ♣A when I was in dummy with the ♠Q. Then, I could ruff a heart and play all the trumps. East, who held four diamonds and the ♣K, would be squeezed on the last spade. "What's the matter with you?" grumbled Lev. "You never heard of the Vienna Coup?"

Is that what he meant by following the simple line? In fact, it was not until after the session that we realized the correct play. Leave the ♣A in dummy, do not touch diamonds, but play out all the spades except the last, coming down to this position:



Since declarer's intention is to ruff out the diamond suit, and he cannot cope with a 4-0 break, it costs nothing to play all but one spade before attacking diamonds. When he eventually leads a diamond to dummy, the bad break is revealed, and South has no option but to cash the ♣A and pray that East has been forced to bare the ♣K on the penultimate trump in order to keep four diamonds.

Somehow, we were leading the field going into the final session. Luckily, bad weather had forced Benito Garozzo and I to abandon our golf challenge (luckily for me, at any rate, for when it was resumed a few months later, he beat me by five holes), so I was able to concentrate fully at the table — in theory, at any rate.

For the last few rounds, Michael Rosenberg and I played on Vugraph — we were at a table surrounded by television cameras, relaying our bids and plays to an audience with our every move followed by expert commentators. I think that people underestimate the effect that Vugraph has on major events. I am sure that some players become nervous in the spotlight, and you can't help but under-perform at bridge if you're nervous. Others feel more comfortable, more confident, and I thought that playing on Vugraph was to our benefit, as we were perhaps more used to the lights than some. We had an average final session, and thought that it would be touch and go whether we won or not. When we came to the last deal of the night, we were both subject to the 'let's hurry up and compare scores' feeling. This, though understandable after three days of the fiercest

bridge you can imagine, was not a very professional outlook. Here is my confession:

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ Q 3
♥ K 6 4
♦ K 10 8
♣ K Q 8 3 2

WEST
♠ A J 9 8 6 5 2
♥ 8
♦ Q 5 2
♣ 7 6

EAST
♠ 10
♥ Q J 3
♦ J 9 6 4 3
♣ A J 9 4

SOUTH
♠ K 7 4
♥ A 10 9 7 5 2
♦ A 7
♣ 10 5

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Michael		*Zia*	
			1♥
3♠	4♥	pass	all pass

Michael led the ♦2. From my point of view, this could have been a singleton — but to tell you the truth, my point of view at that time consisted only of: 'Let's play fast, so we can go and compare scores — and let's avoid the deathly Shriek of the winning team if we lose.' Declarer won the diamond lead in his hand with the ♦A (two, eight, nine, ace). He drew two rounds of trumps — he should probably have played on spades or clubs first. On the second round of hearts, Michael discarded the ♠8. Now, declarer led a club from his hand, Michael played the ♣7, and dummy played the ♣Q.

In this sort of position, it's nearly always right for me to hold up the ♣A. That gives the defense control of activities, and provides time for both defenders to understand what's happening around the table. This was, in short, an obvious hold-up situation. However, ducking was the 'slow' defense, and I was very anxious to find out if we'd won the event or blown it. So I made the feeble play of winning the ♣A to cash the ♥Q. This was not in itself fatal, but look what

happened. Michael threw the ♠9 — perhaps that cancelled the earlier encouraging meaning of the ♠8, but who knew?

A good defender should always try to make things easy for partner. In my heart, I knew I ought to play a diamond, making everything clear. But declarer had only shown up with two aces so far — surely, I thought, he had the ♠A and we would spend the next ten minutes fiddling around to get Michael's ♠K. Why not cut short the torture, play a spade, and get the hell out of here? So I shifted to the ♠10, declarer played low, and now — in my haste to solve all the problems of the hand at once — I had given Michael a headache.

Maybe he should have ducked the spade to dummy's ♠Q — the slow defense that I had rejected — but maybe not, for he could not be sure of the club position. And he, too, wanted to get out of the room and compare scores. Perhaps even the cold-blooded Scots have emotions now and again. So he took the ♠A — uh, oh…

Declarer claimed his contract a moment later, and I felt sick. Imagining that this hand had cost us the tournament, I heard the last cheery bit of news from our opponents, who were one of the teams challenging us for the title. They started congratulating one another on the great session they had played. Just what I needed.

A little sluggishly now, we walked outside, caught sight of our teammates, when — Aiiii! There it was — The Shriek, the dreaded Shriek. We had lost. Like a drowning man, my errors flashed before my eyes. But then I noticed a contradiction. Our teammates were walking towards us smiling, and one of them — Chris Compton — was offering me a double brandy. This had to be good news, because the last time Lev smiled was while he was watching *Fiddler on the Roof* for the twenty-third time, and nobody could remember the last time Compton had bought anyone a drink. We compared scores quickly, and we had indeed won the Reisinger. Then why had I heard the Shriek?

Lev is an Israeli, I am from Pakistan, and Molson is a Canadian. Though Compton is an American, he isn't four Americans, so that meant our team would not be eligible to represent the US in international competition — we could not play in the Trials. Thus the second-placed team — a trio of mixed pairs and real-life sweethearts — had won their place in the US Trials and had truly earned the right to Shriek with delight.

The moral? At bridge, no one can hear you scream…

CRY ME A RIVER

Eddie is a professional bridge player. He plays the American circuit all year round, hiring himself out at tournament like a gunslinger from the old West. Some of Eddie's partners, especially at local tournaments, can be of less than expert class — and that's putting it mildly. But Eddie is pleasant to them all, always ready with a helpful smile and a reassuring word.

As you can imagine, Eddie has seen it all, from bids that would be rejected as implausible in a horror movie script to defenses that were not precisely what Rodin had in mind when he sculpted *The Thinker*. So, when a muttering Eddie interrupted my siesta by the pool at a national tournament in Miami, I was ready to listen.

"I pick up a good hand as East," he began:

♠ A 7 6 ♥ 10 5 3 ♦ K Q ♣ A Q 10 5 4

"However, before my partner, whose turn it is to bid, can get out a syllable, South on my left opens 1NT out of turn! My partner is given the option to accept this bid, but she refuses and opens the bidding with a pass. North passes as well, and I have to decide what to do.

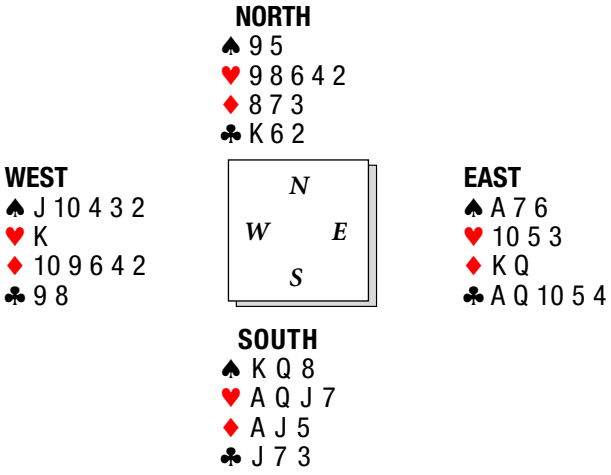
"Since the rules are that South can bid what he likes, but North must pass for the rest of the auction, I decide to open 1♣ rather than 1NT, which is what I'd normally do. It seems to me that South is going to have to guess what to bid, and if he guesses at a high level I'd like a club lead. Sure enough, South decides to gamble on his partner having a few high cards, so he overcalls with 3NT! I'm happy enough with this, so I pass when it comes round to me.

"Partner leads the jack of spades, making me wonder why I bothered to open one club, but the dummy is a reassuring sight at first glance:

NORTH
♠ 9 5
♥ 9 8 6 4 2
♦ 8 7 3
♣ K 6 2

EAST
♠ A 7 6
♥ 10 5 3
♦ K Q
♣ A Q 10 5 4

"You've probably guessed the full hand for yourself, but you may as well see it all:



"I win the ace of spades and return the suit. Declarer wins with the king, shrugs his shoulders, and cashes the ace of hearts. When my partner's king falls on this trick, I begin to feel sick, and as the play progresses I feel worse and worse…

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Eddie	
		1♣	3NT
all pass			

"Of course, once the king of hearts falls under the ace, declarer cashes the queen of spades, then plays four more rounds of hearts ending in the dummy. He next plays ace and another diamond, so I am well and truly endplayed into giving dummy a ninth trick with the king of clubs. As if that wasn't enough, declarer makes an overtrick because his jack of diamonds is now good! Not surprisingly, this particular North-South are the only pair in game…"

Eddie's voice tailed off as he walked away, still muttering to himself and looking for another shoulder to cry on. I wished him luck; he was certainly due some!

SUNDAY AT THE POOL WITH GEORGE

Eleven in the morning, Salt Lake City. Last night was enjoyable but now I am late for the pool on the third day of the Spingold Teams. Kantar already has the prettiest bikinis in his corner and it takes me an extra few minutes to get my lounge chair in a decent position for sunbathing.

Before I can stretch out properly, there is George Mittelman at my side, telling me how impossible it was to figure out what I was doing on Board 43 last night.

"C'mon, George," I say. "It wasn't that hard"

"Listen," I call out, "anybody at the pool who can decipher this defensive problem I want for my next partner." Mind you, nobody jumps at this opportunity, but a few heads lean forward an inch or so and think it over before returning to their newspapers. So I jot down the hand on the back of George's *Daily Bulletin* and bring it over to Eddie Kantar's real-life corner in the pool.

Here's your chance Eddie. Don't let me down. South deals, neither side vulnerable. You're East, playing with me.

NORTH
♠ Q 8 6 4
♥ K 10 5 4
♦ K J 2
♣ 5 3

EAST
♠ K 10 9
♥ 8
♦ 10 9 7 5 4
♣ 10 8 4 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
pass	4♣	pass	4♥
pass	6♥	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

I lead the jack of clubs to declarer's ace. He plays four rounds of trumps, which I follow to. Tell me your discards.

Eddie takes the hand and examines it. Several bathing beauties lean over his chair to study the hand as well. George rubs the back of his head. I return to my lounge and go to work for *Bridge Today*.

Besides the hand that Kantar is working on in the corner, there are three other interesting deals from yesterday's match, which curiously enough featured very similar contracts. I call them 'The Tale of Six Diamonds.' The first one came up when George and I held these cards:

NORTH
♠ K 9 4 2
♥ 3
♦ K 9
♣ K Q 8 6 4 3

SOUTH
♠ A J 5 3
♥ A 8 7
♦ A Q J 8 6 5
♣ —

ME	GEORGE	
1♦	1♠	(2♥overcall)
3♥	4♣	
4♥	4NT	
5♣	5♦	
5♥	5♠	
6♦	pass	(dbl)

I can't say that I agree with George's one-level response. However, it gave us an opportunity to demonstrate the theory of slippage. That is, slipping out of our agreed fit and slipping into a new one — at the six-level.

My three heart bid was a general strong spade raise, and over four clubs, the four heart cuebid was the real thing. In response to Blackwood, 5♣ showed zero or three aces. Five diamonds by George asked, do you have the trump queen? We reply by steps, step one (five hearts) being no, I do not have it.

Missing an ace plus the queen of spades, George signed off in 5♠. Realizing that George must hold an abundance of kings and queens outside of spades in order to Blackwood, I slipped in a six diamond call as a suggestion we play there. George could hardly return to 5♠, so he was forced to choose between 6♦ and 6♠ and judging his diamond king a good value, he left me in 6♦.

Suddenly, out of the blue yonder came a double. Both George

and I held our ground, and a spade was led and ruffed! The fellow then tried to cash his ♣A and we scored the slam.

The second 6♦ contract was:

NORTH *(George)*
♠ A K 9 3
♥ K J 9 5 4
♦ A K 7
♣ A

SOUTH *(Me)*
♠ J 10 4
♥ 3
♦ Q J 8 6 4
♣ K 10 7 6

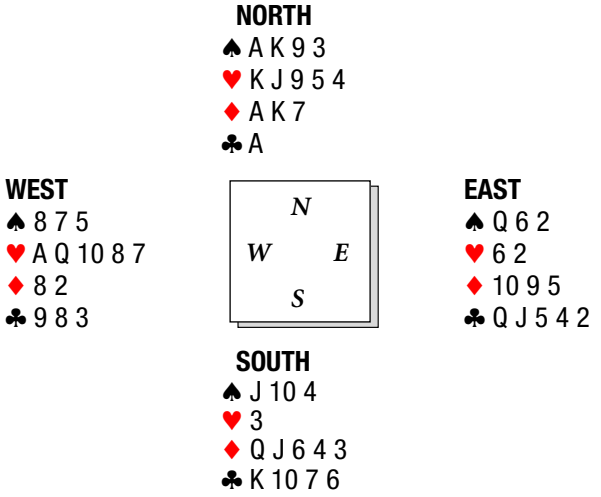
WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
	George		*Me*
		pass	pass
1♥	dbl	pass	2♦
pass	2♥	pass	4♥
pass	6♦	all pass	

After West opened 1♥ in third seat favorable, George doubled for takeout and I replied with 2♦. Then the fun began. George cue-bid 2♥ to force me to describe my hand further and I jumped to 4♥ to show a singleton. George smiled and went to his famous rubbing-the-back-of-his-head gesture which means that in his system, somebody has done something he hasn't seen or heard in the last ten years. That somebody is usually me, and finally he ended it all with 6♦. West led the ♥A.

Next came a shift to a medium-high club. How would you play it? With ten top tricks, you could try to ruff a couple clubs in dummy, but not without ruffing two cards in your hand for entries, and a third ruff in your hand will prevent you from drawing trumps. One idea is to cross-ruff completely, but East is likely to be short in

hearts, and will uppercut you when you lead the suit from dummy. A simpler approach is to draw trumps and rely on the finesse against the spade queen, a card that, from the bidding, is likely to be onside.

Or is it? Never trust a third seat opener, especially favorable. Here was the whole hand:



You see what I mean? The queen of spades was nestling in the East hand, just waiting for me to finesse into her. Luckily, I come from a long line of suspicious characters (and my years of rubber bridge have taught me never to trust anyone, anyway). I was certainly not going to rely on the spade finesse if I could find any sensible alternative.

I tried a middle approach. I had ten top tricks. If I could score one club ruff for eleven, a twelfth might materialize in any of three suits. After the club shift, I drew two rounds of trumps by leading to dummy's king and back to my queen. If the trump suit was not 3-2, I could not afford even one club ruff in dummy because I would have to ruff two cards in my hand for entries.

When I saw the diamond suit divide, I ruffed a club in dummy, ruffed a heart back to my hand and drew the last trump, West throwing a club. Next I led the jack of spades to dummy's ace and cashed the ♥K discarding the ♠10 from my hand.

Then I ruffed another heart in my hand. But not so fast. Look at East's problem as I led the ♥9 off dummy:

NORTH
♠ K 9
♥ J 9
♦ —
♣ —

WEST
♠ 8 7
♥ Q 10
♦ —
♣ —

EAST
♠ Q 6
♥ —
♦ —
♣ Q J

SOUTH
♠ 4
♥ —
♦ 6
♣ K 10

He could not throw a club honor, so he had to release a spade. He still had hopes that I would finesse. But when I ruffed the heart and played the ♣K, West who had to keep the ♥Q, also had to throw a spade.

With two cards left, I knew West still held the ♥Q and East still held the ♣Q. Therefore the spades had to be divided 1-1 as I led to dummy's ♠K.

Finally six diamonds redoubled. My only regret is that George got to play it:

ME
♠ A 2
♥ A K Q
♦ A K Q J 10 4 2
♣ 2

GEORGE
♠ K 4 3
♥ 7 6 5 4 3
♦ 8 7
♣ J 4 3

ME
♠ A 2
♥ A K Q
♦ A K Q J 10 4 2
♣ 2

hand repeated for convenience

GEORGE
♠ K 4 3
♥ 7 6 5 4 3
♦ 8 7
♣ J 4 3

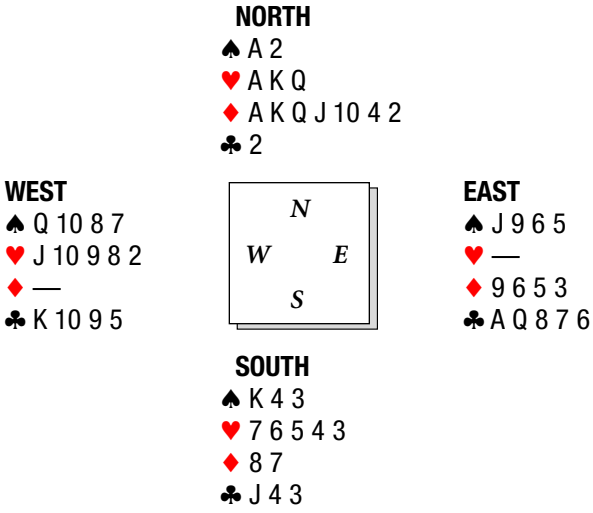
ME		GEORGE
2♣		2♦
3♦		3NT
4♦		4♠
6♦	(dbl)	pass
redbl		

George began with a two diamond response which we play as waiting, and ended up stealing my suit. I 'raised' him and he bid 3NT rather than 3♥ on five little. Since he had now stolen notrump from me as well as my diamonds (the b_____d), I decided to torture him with a 4♦ bid. This would force him to make still another bid on his near Yarborough.

Four diamonds should mean, partner, please cuebid. George, who is one of the most cooperative partners and decent bidders that I have ever played with, gave me 4♠ on king third. That was all I needed to bid 6♦, when suddenly my left-hand opponent joined the party with a double.

Now the question was, should I redouble? Was the double of George's slam contract for a club lead, since I had opened with 2♣? In that case, how could we lose more than one trick? If, instead, the doubler held a major-suit void. East would have to find the lead. Besides which, it was a matter of honor for me to redouble when the

opponents challenged George's declarer play. George, however, did not see the issue as being one of honor, and began to rub the back of his head — since he was about to declare a redoubled slam in diamonds with a king, a jack and a small doubleton trump. This was the whole hand:



A low club was led. Perhaps West should have led a king. That would have allowed him to shift at Trick 2.

Then again, he might have started the deuce of hearts — a suit preference for a club return — and sent me reeling to the pool the next morning with a minus 1000 on my scorepad.

However, his low club lead allowed George to make the slam, and our teammate at the other table, Ron Smith in the East chair, demonstrated the wisdom of not doubling. Billy Cohen, in the West chair, led a heart and the slam failed.

Meanwhile back at the pool, the bikini brigade and Kantar had emerged from the corner. Despite the numerous distractions, Eddie has come up with the winning solution to my 6♥ doubled defensive problem:

NORTH
♠ Q 8 6 4
♥ K 10 5 4
♦ K J 2
♣ 5 3

WEST
♠ J 5 3 2
♥ 7 6 3 2
♦ —
♣ Q J 9 7 6

EAST
♠ K 10 9
♥ 8
♦ 10 9 7 5 4
♣ 10 8 4 2

SOUTH
♠ A 7
♥ A Q J 9
♦ A Q 8 6 3
♣ A K

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
pass	4♣	pass	4♥
pass	6♥	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

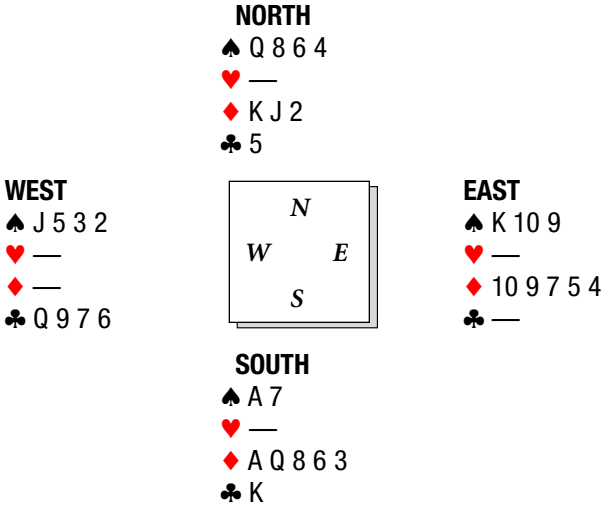
Opening lead: ♣J

East's first step is to analyze the bidding. Declarer must hold at least twenty-four points for his 3NT call, if not more. That leaves West with at most three or four. Why the double then? The only explanation could be that West is doubling with a void, with the hope of alerting you, East, should you gain the lead before four rounds of trumps are pulled. The void can be in no other suit but diamonds, which means declarer's shape is 2-4-5-2. Also, partner could easily have led the jack of clubs from queen-jack to fool declarer in case an honor showed up in dummy.

The main inference is that West is void in diamonds and whatever you do you must not discard a diamond.

That's only half of it, however. If you got that far, as Eddie did, you must see into the future. Three club pitches on the run of the

trump suit will reduce the hand to this position:



Declarer will play dummy's diamond king and receive the bad news. He will then have a choice: lead ace and a spade to the queen, playing West for the king, or run the diamonds and club king, then lead the last diamond — endplaying East.

Unfortunately, declarer may reason from your club discards that you are holding onto your spades to guard the king.

I think it's best, therefore, to throw a spade as soon as possible. Granted, the spade nine and ten are very glaring cards. Once you pitch one of them, declarer may play you for the king anyway. But at least you've done your best.

A fantastic alternative is to discard both the ten and the nine of spades! Declarer will not believe you are stiffing the king, and he may thing you've started life with K-J-10-9 of spades. In that case, he'll go for the endplay, but you'll have a club left when you are thrown in at Trick 11. The slam will be down two and Zia will be your partner at the next Nationals — wait a second, I forgot about my offer — where did Eddie go? Eddie! Only one bikini remains. If you see Eddie, tell him we'll meet him in Nashville at the pool. George, you're gone as well! No wonder, it's game time! I've got to run.

NOW WATCH CAREFULLY

As we were comparing scores, our teammates said, "Sorry, we got a bit high on Board 24. We were in 3NT down one, minus 50.

"That's O.K.," I reassured him, "We were plus 100, so we win the board." The tournament in St. Louis, Missouri was in the format known as 'Board-a-Match', where the margin of gain or loss on any particular deal is irrelevant — you simply win, lose or tie each board. "They went two down in 3NT then?" asked our relieved teammate.

"Well, they went two down — but they were only 1NT!" I replied, enjoying my colleague's look of amazement.

With gambits of all sorts written up in the world's bridge press as soon as they occur, it takes a rare kind of genius to come up with an original card combination. Fortunately, I was playing with one of those on the deal we were discussing. Michael Rosenberg, formerly of Scotland but now a native of New York, is one of the greatest bridge talents the world has ever seen. He combines near-perfect technical accuracy with the hallmark of true genius — the ability to invent great plays at the table. For a taste of what it's like to be on the receiving end of a Rosenberg special, take the South cards and plan the the play in a modest contract of 1NT:

NORTH
♠ Q 9 6
♥ K 8 4 3
♦ J 9 2
♣ J 8 3

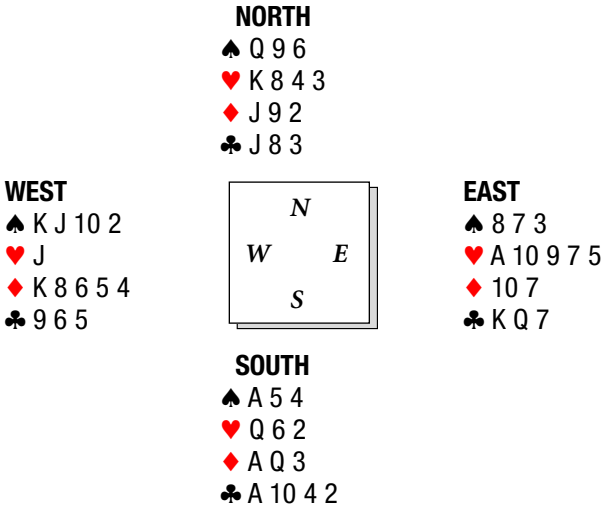
SOUTH
♠ A 5 4
♥ Q 6 2
♦ A Q 3
♣ A 10 4 2

West leads the 5♦, you play low from dummy and win East's ten with the queen. You have plenty of work to do, but for the moment it looks natural to play on hearts, attempting to set up a couple of tricks there and hoping that the opponents may do something to help you in the other suits. You lead the ♥2, West plays the jack, dummy the king and East the five. Maybe it's your lucky day — certainly it appears that West may have begun with A-J doubleton in hearts. You lead the ♥3 from dummy, East plays the seven, you duck and...

It isn't your lucky day at all. You have just fallen victim to an

especially devilish piece of deception by Michael Rosenberg in the East chair.

This was the full deal:



When Rosenberg's ♥7 held the trick, he cashed three more winners in the suit before leading a diamond. West took his king and cleared the suit, and the hapless declarer could do no better than play ace and another spade. West, of course, won his king and cashed the rest of his diamonds for two down.

You may wonder, as I did, what our teammates were doing in 3NT on their combined balanced twenty-one points. I'm afraid you'll have to go on wondering. You see, our teammates were bigger than I am, so I didn't ask.

HONORS AMONG THIEVES

The Devil's Coup, the Smother Play, the Scissors Coup, the Coup with No Name — despite sounding like a series of horror film titles to rival *Nightmare on Elm Street 13*, these are simply labels for some of the more interesting gambits that occur at the bridge table. A coup that is perhaps less well-known goes by the irresistible name of the 'Alcatraz Coup'. This is the story of how it came into being.

There was not much to do on the island prison of Alcatraz, but four of the inmates had formed a regular bridge game at the instigation of the appropriately named 'Legs' Diamond. The form of scoring was, of course, Chicago — a form of rubber bridge in which four deals are played with each partner. The vulnerability is pre-set, and there are bonuses for any game contract.

For 'Fingers' Malone, Diamond's partner, it had not been a happy Chicago. On the second hand, with North-South only vulnerable, West dealt these cards:

NORTH
♠ K J 8 5 4
♥ A Q 8 4
♦ J 8 7
♣ 6

WEST
♠ 10
♥ J 7
♦ Q 10 9
♣ K J 10 8 7 5 3

EAST
♠ A 7 6 3
♥ K
♦ A 6 5 4 3
♣ A Q 4

SOUTH
♠ Q 9 2
♥ 10 9 6 5 3 2
♦ K 2
♣ 9 2

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Legs Diamond	*Dutch Schultz*	*Fingers Malone*	*Lucky Luciano*
3♣	dbl	3NT	4♥
all pass			

North made an aggressive entry into the auction over the opening 3♣, but as is well known, Schultz had acquired his nickname because his favorite call was 'Double'. Fingers as East tried 3NT, hoping to avoid a heart lead. But 'Lucky' Luciano bid 4♥, relying on the astounding good fortune that he always enjoyed.

This time, it seemed that his luck had run out when Legs Diamond led his singleton spade. Dummy played low, Fingers played the ♠A, and Luciano dropped the ♠Q. Falsecards were of course mandatory in this company, but it was possible that West had led from ♠1092, so Fingers took a while over his next move. Eventually, he had what was for him quite a bright idea — he would cash the ♦A. If partner played an encouraging card, he would cash the ♣A and play another diamond. If, instead, Legs discouraged on the ♦A — confirming that the opening lead had been a singleton —

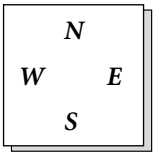
Fingers would switch back to spades.

The ♦A was greeted by the ♦2 from declarer and the ♦9 from West, which Fingers construed as an encouraging card because it looked high. Following his master plan, he cashed the ♣A and played a second diamond. But Luciano won the ♦K and led a heart to the ace — with his usual luck, the singleton ♥K fell, and he claimed the contract.

There was an ominous silence as three things slowly dawned on Fingers's far from powerful intellect. First, 5♣ would have made in comfort for East-West. Second, the ♦9 had been the lowest outstanding card in the suit, and therefore not an encouraging signal at all. Finally, Diamond was idly scratching his left leg, which in normal circumstances would not have been disturbing, but Fingers knew what was strapped to the limb in question. The final deal of the Chicago gave Fingers the chance to make amends.

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ A Q 3
♥ K 9 8 4
♦ A K 5 3
♣ K 2



SOUTH
♠ K J 7
♥ A J 10 5
♦ Q 10 2
♣ A J 5

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Dutch	*Legs*	*Lucky*	*Fingers*
Schultz	*Diamond*	*Luciano*	*Malone*
			1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♥
pass	4NT	pass	5♥
pass	5NT	pass	6♦
pass	7♥	all pass	

North's bidding had been aggressive, but all things considered, that was not surprising. The opening lead was ♠10, which gave nothing away. Fingers knew only too well that people who made two mistakes playing with Legs Diamond did not live long enough to make three, so he simply could not afford to go down in the grand slam. Was there a way to improve his chances of locating the crucial ♥Q, which on the face of it was a 50-50 proposition?

There is no better stimulus than terror to even the bluntest of intelligences, and suddenly Fingers had another brainwave. He would claim 100 for honors, pretending to hold ♥AQJ10! Whichever opponent held the ♥Q would know that Fingers could not possibly have honors, since the ♥K was in dummy, and would be bound to give the show away.

"Well bid, partner," said Fingers confidently, "and we have 100 for honors, what's more." Luciano, his right-hand opponent, wrote down 100 above the line on his scorecard, but Schultz on his left ignored the comment and stared unblinkingly at Fingers. This was all the help that declarer needed — surely, Dutch had the missing ♥Q. Winning the spade lead with dummy's ace, Fingers led a heart to his ace and ran the ♥J, and the Alcatraz Coup was born.

So also, alas, was the Counter-Alcatraz Coup, and since that ill-starred Chicago, the luckless declarer's name had to be changed to 'No Fingers Malone'. You see, when East won the ♥J with the queen, Diamond reached for the nearest weapon to hand, which happened to be the knife strapped to his left leg…

HEART FAILURE

There's nothing I hate more than crying about bad luck at the bridge table. Although hard luck stories abound at the bar of every bridge club in the world, the truth is that luck evens out in the long run, and yours is no better or worse than mine. But every now and again, there is an exception — and as my team lost in a Trial to play in the World Championships because of one single hateful board, I'm going to tell my own hard-luck story. After all, who better to turn to for sympathy and understanding than my own tolerant readers.

The match was very close when I took out this hand from the board. Perhaps it was an omen that my cards were mysteriously grouped into suits, even though the deck had just been shuffled and dealt at the table:

♠ K Q J 10 7 6 5 ♥ 4 ♦ K J ♣ A J 3

We were vulnerable, the opponents were not, and my partner

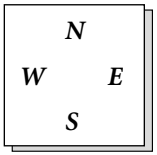
opened the bidding with one heart. Right-hand opponent passed, and it all looked very simple. I would bid two spades, then perhaps three spades to confirm the suit as trumps, then use Blackwood and bid six or seven spades depending in the number of aces I found opposite. I put my plan into action, and this was the bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	3♠
pass	4♦[1]	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

1. A cuebid, agreeing spades as trumps and showing a control in diamonds.

West led the ♣5, and my partner put down a good-looking dummy:

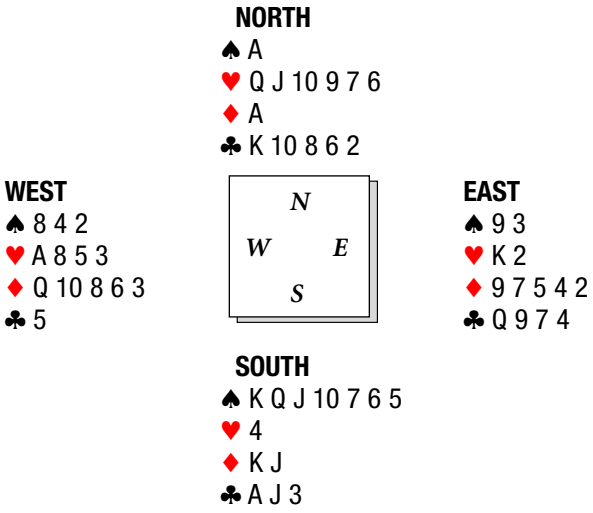
NORTH
♠ A
♥ Q J 10 9 7 6
♦ A
♣ K 10 8 6 2



SOUTH
♠ K Q J 10 7 6 5
♥ 4
♦ K J
♣ A J 3

The only apparent problem, the location of the queen of clubs, had been solved by the opening lead. I had seven spade tricks, a couple of diamonds, at least three clubs... what could go wrong? I played the ♣2 from dummy and won East's seven with the jack. I played a spade to the ace — and a snag appeared. I had to get back to my hand to draw trumps, and suddenly the contract was at risk.

If West's club lead had been a singleton or from a four-card holding, I could not cross to my hand with the ♣A because a defender would ruff it and I would also lose a heart. A better play would be to lead the queen of hearts from dummy. Perhaps the player now void in clubs would have both the ace and king of hearts, in which case the defense could not take both a club ruff and a heart trick. Moreover, if West had a singleton club and the ♥A, East might not realize that he needed to play the ♥K at the third trick in order to give West the killing ruff. Of course, the clubs might be 3-2 anyway — that would be the normal division, after all — but I had a feeling about this hand. Why, I wondered, could partner not have produced a small diamond instead of all those clubs? With mounting apprehension I led the queen of hearts from dummy. East won the king and led a club, and this was the full deal:



West's ♠4 sliced into my heart like a dagger, killing the slam and our hopes with it. East had done well to go up with the ♥K at the second trick; he had drawn the correct inference that if I had all the aces, I would have made a try for the grand slam. We congratulated our opponents, wished them well in the next stage of the US trials — and spent the rest of the day telling anyone who would listen our hard-luck story.

HOT TIME IN A COLD TOWN

The American Contract Bridge League can on occasions find novel ways to annoy its members. A famous effort one year was to hold the Winter Nationals tournament in the sub-arctic temperatures of Minneapolis in November.

I had a most unusual experience at the table during the tournament. I held an eight-card suit. Not very odd, you may think, since an eight-card suit occurs about once in every two hundred deals — but on this occasion my partner bid the suit naturally before I could!

There is something about wildly distributional hands that excites and intrigues expert and beginner alike. Whirlpools of possibility cause our minds to reel — but euphoria is a dangerous emotion at the table, and often hampers the objectivity which is the essence of good bridge. Since very little is written on the subject of such freak hands, this example illustrates a tactic that you might find useful. Sit in the East seat and take my cards, which were:

♠ K Q J 9 8 7 4 3 ♥ K 10 ♦ — ♣ A Q 2

You hear the following auction with your side only vulnerable:

WEST	NORTH	EAST *You*	SOUTH
			1♥
1♠	4♥	?	

Your first impulse may be to burst out laughing as you jump to 6♠, but let's reflect for a moment. If you do just bid the slam, your opponents — both of whom are void in spades — might well conclude that you are on the level and decide to take out insurance in 7♥. You will have no guarantee of making 7♠, so you will just have to take what you can get from their save, which may not be very much at all. Perhaps you will extract a penalty of only 300 or 500, less even than the value of a game, never mind a slam for your side.

Now for an important principle. When you can see that the opponents can save profitably against your optimum contract, just try to play the hand at any level at or beyond game. Even if this means passing up a certain slam, it is better to score 680 in 4♠ than 500 against 7♥. Moreover, there is quite likely to be some more bidding on this hand if you simply jump to game — your opponents may misjudge the later auction. You take a deep breath, and you bid just 4♠!

South bids 5♦, your partner passes and North bids 5♥. Following the master plan, you bid 5♠. There are two passes to North, who bids 6♥. Now you have achieved your objective — nobody really knows who's sacrificing against whom, but it sounds as though you may be the side doing the saving. You bid 6♠. Will they fall for it and let you play there?

South passes, and so does West, but North has seen your sort

before. He sacrifices in 7♥, and you have no choice but to double. Oh, well — at least you tried your best in the bidding. Now, see what you can do in the defense.

Partner leads the ♣J, which could be from ♣J10 or ♣KJ10 in your methods, and this is the dummy:

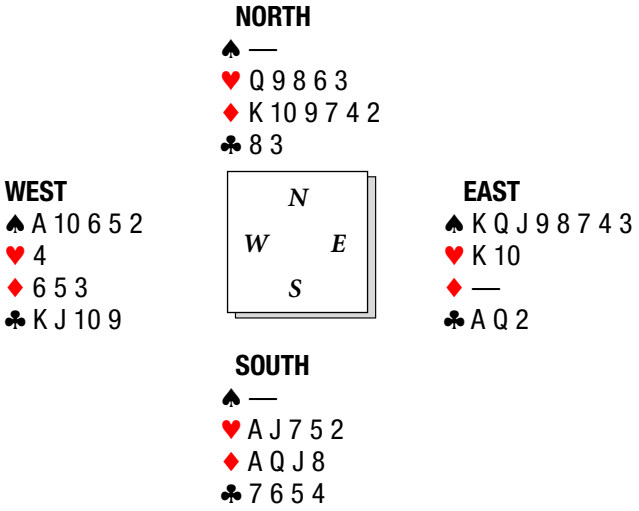
NORTH
♠ —
♥ Q 9 8 6 3
♦ K 10 9 7 4 2
♣ 8 3

EAST
♠ K Q J 9 8 7 4 3
♥ K 10
♦ —
♣ A Q 2

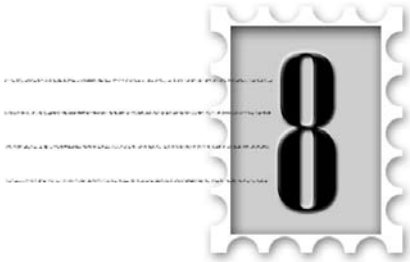
WEST	NORTH	EAST *You*	SOUTH
			1♥
1♠	4♥	4♠	5♦
pass	5♥	5♠	pass
pass	6♥	6♠	pass
pass	7♥	dbl	all pass

They're in a grand slam, so you take your ♣A and... No, you don't. Partner made a vulnerable overcall with nothing in hearts, nothing in diamonds (South bid the suit, remember) and a moth-eaten ♠A10652. He must have the ♣K to justify his bid. Play the ♣2, so that he can retain the lead and give you a diamond ruff. You can then lead the ♣Q to his king, and another diamond ruff will get you 800 — more than a game, at least, for all your efforts.

"But suppose", comes the horrid thought, "partner for some unfathomable reason doesn't have the ♣K. Surely I cannot risk letting them make this contract!" Relax — even if you play the ♣2 and declarer wins with the king, he cannot reach dummy (since he does not have a spade), so you will come to a heart and a club in good time. This was the full deal:



Now for a confession. I was East at the table, and I'm ashamed to say that I did not find the winning defense. I cravenly overtook the ♣J with the ace and returned the suit, so we collected only 500 points. But my disappointment at myself didn't stop me from appreciating a wonderful hand that for a moment at least gave us a glow warm enough to drive out the Minnesota cold.



SITTING DUCK

Orlando in Florida is the home of Disney World, a gigantic playpen for children of all ages. Not for nothing is it the world's most popular vacation spot. Bridge players often act like overgrown children so Orlando certainly seems an appropriate enough spot for a national bridge tournament.

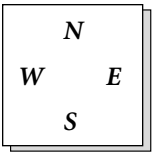
In November 1992 around 6000 players descended on the Peabody Hotel, an otherwise quiet establishment famous for the tame ducks in the lobby fountain. These birds, used to being gawked at and fed by tourists, were to their disgust completely ignored by a new breed of hotel resident for whom the word 'duck' related only to when they should take their aces.

The first event at a Fall Nationals is the Life Masters Pairs. The winners of the 1992 LM Pairs were both men — and curiously enough, both were options traders on Wall Street. Perhaps it should not surprise you that such people are good players. — they are used to making fast decisions, where guts, skill, luck and timing are every-

thing, just as they can be at the bridge table. Sometimes, though, you can be too clever on a bridge hand — as I am sure you can on Wall Street too. Watch one of the winners, Michael Rosenberg, almost outsmart himself on this hand:

NORTH
♠ 6 5 4 3
♥ A Q J
♦ 9 3
♣ A Q 6 3

WEST
♠ Q J 9
♥ 9 8 6 2
♦ A Q J 7 5 4
♣ —

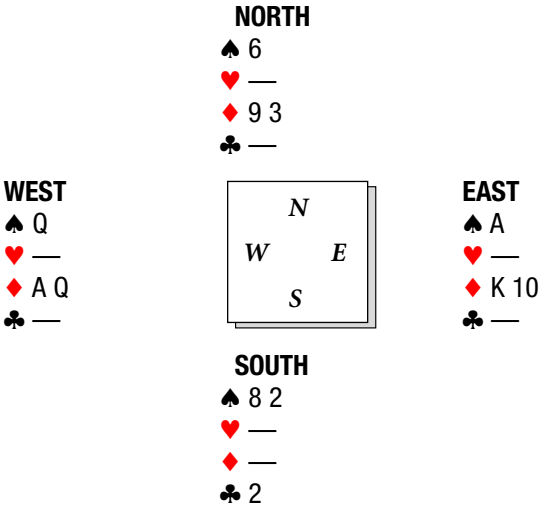


EAST
♠ A 10 7
♥ 10 7 5 3
♦ K 10 8 6 2
♣ 4

SOUTH
♠ K 8 2
♥ K 4
♦ —
♣ K J 10 9 8 7 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH *Rosenberg*
1♦	dbl	1♥	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♣
all pass			

The bidding was straightforward if a little agricultural, but the play was far from simple. Michael Rosenberg felt sure that the ♠A would be with West for the opening bid, and that the obvious line of play — a spade towards the king for the twelfth trick — was doomed to failure. A beginner, seeing nothing better, might shrug his shoulders and try this play anyway, but Michael is no beginner, and he contrived a devilish deception. He won the opening heart lead with the jack, drew trumps, and played two more top hearts discarding the ♠K from his hand! He then led out six more rounds of clubs on which both defenders, completely taken in, threw their spades and kept their diamonds to arrive at this end position:



Michael played the eight of spades, collecting the ace and queen on the trick, and was able to claim the last two tricks and his slam with two black deuces. The color of these cards contrasted well with four red faces around the table — West's and East's because of their misdefense, Rosenberg's when he discovered that the ♠A had been right all the time, and dummy's because he was laughing so hard!

CAPRICIOUS CHRISTI

Corpus Christi is a charming seaside resort in Texas, much favored by vacationers looking for a few days of peace and quiet. Its seafood and deep-sea fishing are especially well-known.

The tranquility of the resort was shattered in 1992 when five hundred bridge players descended on the town, talking not of marlin and swordfish but of auctions and endplays. Their accents ranged from the exotic Chilean and Peruvian to the nasal twang of New York, for twenty-six nations were assembled to contest the first-ever Pan-American bridge championships. With world champions and Grand Masters in abundance, the level of skill was very high. But Lady Luck was to show that even the greatest talent avails nothing against her caprice.

The North Americans monopolized the team events, winning both Open and Ladies titles, and also picking up the Ladies Pairs. It was left to the Brazilian stars Gabriel Chagas and Marcelo Branco to uphold the honor of the southern continent in the Open Pairs.

Chagas, one of the best card players of all time, is a five-foot bundle of nervous energy. As lovable as he is brilliant, he is equally well known for his gargantuan appetite, truly amazing in so slight a figure. One of the great pleasures of the tournament circuit is to sit with Chagas at dinner as he wolfs down enormous quantities of food while discussing the day's hands with all and sundry, switching rapidly from one to another of the eighteen languages in which he is fluent.

In the lead with one board remaining to be played, Chagas and Branco needed no more than an average result to win the Open Pairs. The deal looked innocuous enough:

Pairs
Neither Vul.

NORTH
♠ 8 3 2
♥ Q 7 6 5
♦ K J 9 4
♣ 10 3

WEST
♠ A K 6 5
♥ K 9 8
♦ Q 10 7 6 5
♣ 7

EAST
♠ Q 10 9
♥ J 10 3
♦ A 2
♣ A K Q 6 4

SOUTH
♠ J 7 4
♥ A 4 2
♦ 8 3
♣ J 9 8 5 2

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Varela	*Chagas*	*Miyakumi*	*Branco*
1♥	pass	2♣	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	all pass

West was Claudio Varela of Venezuela, and it seemed likely that he would open the bidding with the routine 1♦. East and West would reach the predestined 3NT, Chagas would lead a normal fourth-best heart from the North hand, and with the unfavorable lie of the minor-suits West would make nine tricks — no more, and no less. Since this is what in fact happened at every other table, the Brazilians would achieve their average score and the Pan-American Pairs title.

But a funny thing happened on the way to the gold medal. The spectators watched in amazement as Varela chose for his opening bid not 1♦ — but 1♥! This was not a systemic quirk, nor was it a psychic flight of fancy by the Venezuelan. For the first time in hundreds of deals, Varela had simply pulled the wrong card out of his bidding box. In top-level tournaments, the players use bidding cards with the bids written on them, which are taken from a box and placed on the table when a bid is made. The idea is to prevent verbal inflections, and to overcome the language barrier.

Varela had, of course, meant to pull out the card for 1♦, but his fingers betrayed him. He showed no sign that anything untoward had occurred as the auction continued. Again, the capricious goddess took a hand — East, playing five-card majors, might well have opted to bid game in his partner's heart 'suit', but he decided to try for the better pairs score available in 3NT.

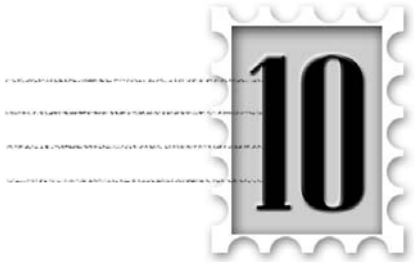
The unsuspecting Chagas, so often the setter of brilliant traps for his opponents, was for once the victim. At every other table, West had bid diamonds, so North led hearts. At this one, West had bid hearts, so North led a diamond, right into the teeth of West's real suit. Now declarer was able to come to ten tricks — and at matchpoint scoring, the overtrick was vital, converting Chagas and Branco's result from an average into a near-bottom.

East and West were profuse in their apologies, but they could not alter the fact that Eric Rodwell and Doug Simson from the United States came from second place to overtake the Brazilians and win the event by one solitary matchpoint. Thus, the US achieved a clean sweep of the Pan-American championships. They say that it's more important to take part than to win — but I don't expect they said that to Chagas and Branco for a while, in any language.

Destination

2

New York



AT LEAST HE'S NOT PERFECT

Many years ago, an American bridge magazine conducted a survey among the world's leading players to find out who was rated number one. With remarkable tact and insight into the fragile ego of the bridge expert, the magazine phrased its question delicately. "Whom do you consider", it asked, "to be the second-best bridge player in the world?"

The winner, by a resounding margin, was Howard Schenken — certainly one of the greatest players not only of that time, but of all time. If the same poll were to be conducted today, though, the winner would certainly be my good friend Robert Hamman. Like everything else that comes from Texas, Hamman is a little larger than life — a silver-haired giant of a man, whose appetite is as prodigious as his sense of humor and fair play. He combines a highly practical approach to the game with a fierce determination to win, and his computer-like brain allied to remorseless concentration has justly

earned him the reputation of the most consistently accurate player in the world today.

When a man bites a dog, that's news, and when Bob Hamman makes an error, that's big news. Despite his many world titles and the innumerable great bids and plays that he has made, the hand for which Hamman is most easily remembered occurred in the final of the 1980 World Championship. His French opponents bid to a grand slam in diamonds and, holding two major-suit aces, he doubled them. Alas, he led the 'wrong' ace, enabling declarer to make the slam which had been bid as a sacrifice, and enabling France to win the match. Nightmares have a habit of recurring, and that deal must have come back to haunt the great man years later when he played in the Cavendish tournament in New York.

The Cavendish is not a world championship, but to be invited into its select field can be both prestigious and profitable, for the prize money is hundreds of thousands of dollars. The pressure is intense, because the event is scored in such a way that you compare your result with every pair sitting in the same direction as you. This means that if you go down in a game contract that every other pair has made, you lose not the usual 12 IMPs but 238! And if you find the wrong lead against a grand slam...

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ K 9 7 5 3
♥ —
♦ 2
♣ A K J 10 7 6 4

WEST
♠ 10
♥ 7 3 2
♦ A K 10 9 7 6 5
♣ 5 3

EAST
♠ 8 6
♥ Q 10 9 6 5 4
♦ Q J 4 3
♣ 9

SOUTH
♠ A Q J 4 2
♥ A K J 8
♦ 8
♣ Q 8 2

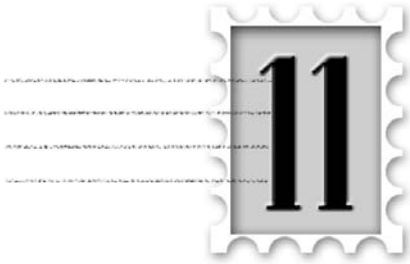
Hamman was West on this deal, and Gaylor Kasle was North. This was the auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
2♦	4♦[1]	4♥[2]	4NT[3]
5♥	7♠	all pass	

1. Showing a diamond control — singleton or void — and good support for spades.
2. Don't ask me why East bid this. You can't fight City Hall, and you can't outbid the spade suit at the four-level. 5♦ or even 6♦ would be more to the point — 4♥ had a dreadful consequence for the defense.
3. Blackwood.

Gaylor Kasle is the playboy of the American professional circuit, but he has a reputation as a solid and conservative player. His remarkable leap to 7♠ was quite out of character — an outrageous bluff. Having shown a diamond shortage, he hoped to convince Hamman that the shortage must be a void. Otherwise, how could he risk a grand slam with a loser in the suit overcalled by the player on lead? Confident that there would be a diamond void in the dummy, Hamman led a heart in response to East's foolish bid of 4♥, and declarer claimed his grand slam.

While I have every sympathy with Bob Hamman, I confess to a sense of relief. After all, if Bob were as good at opening leads as he is at every other aspect of the game, ambitious pretenders like myself would have to confine ourselves to writing about him!



A STORY GOES WITH IT

If all the various kinds of bridge were placed before us and I had to select the one I like the most, it wouldn't be close — rubber bridge would win easily.

I can't say how strongly I recommend this great game to the many tournament players who haven't tried it. I guarantee that:

1. You will love it, and,

2. It will do more to improve your game (especially card play) than any other form of teaching.

I have always felt sorry that rubber bridge in some form has never been included as a tournament vehicle — like they do with poker tournaments. I think the danger, excitement, and great fun would be very catching.

I play in a late-night game at Al Roth's Mayfair Club in New York. The stakes range from astronomical upwards (I won't tell you the actual figures, but it should suffice to say that 100 honors would be enough to buy a few racing camels). In short, the game is fast and expensive. The other players in the game are not exactly those you would take home to meet your family, but are great characters.

You get about a half a minute to discuss your conventions while the cards are being shuffled, and most of that time is spent arguing with your partner about the last deal or trying to get a tip for the next horse race at the Belmont.

American clubs such as the Mayfair differ greatly from bridge clubs in London, where conventions are practically not allowed at all. My first visit to the Mayfair was a sobering experience. I lost heavily, and it was also my first experience with playing with a guy nicknamed 'Harry the Horse'. Harry is called The Horse partly because he looked uncomfortably like one, bid even more closely like one, but more to the point, regularly earned a six-figure income betting on the horses. He is about 6'6" tall and always looks as though he just got up.

♠ 5 ♥ Q 10 7 3 ♦ A Q 4 ♣ A J 10 6 5

Deal one. Neither side vulnerable. Harry deals and passes. Four spades is opened on my right. Should I double or pass? I know that at the Mayfair Club, where negative and responsive doubles are the norm, first-round doubles of preempts are for takeout. It's true that Harry the Horse is a passed hand, but the first deals of any chukker are psychologically important. I want to show who owns the table. Double, I say. Redouble says the guy to my left who doesn't seem to know or care who owns the table.

Pass, pass to me. What's that song? 'No place to run, no place to hi-ide!' Harry the Horse has been playing bridge for thirty years and knows enough to bid if he has a long suit. So I pass. Minus 1030, only one overtrick. Believe me, it would have been much worse had I run to five clubs. I won't trouble you by showing my partner's hand; there was nothing there to show.

Upon reflection, I think that I was overbidding as usual and should pass — in fact, my bank manager has good enough sense to know that I should pass. Too bad. You can't brood on your disasters in this game. Maybe I'll get it back on the next hand.

♠ — ♥ Q 10 4 3 ♦ J 10 9 5 4 ♣ A Q 8 6

Favorable. The guy on my right opens four spades again! Why doesn't he leave me alone? I probably should double for takeout, but Harry will expect more defense. So I decide to bid 4NT, takeout for something, I'm not sure what. Lefty, who must be the world's toughest player (he probably beats up his dog), doubles me as usual and after two passes I run in a quiet voice to five diamonds, my long suit. LHO doubles and suddenly Harry the Horse, with a snort worthy of the great filly, Alysheba, redoubles!

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Me	*Lefty*	*The Horse*	*Righty*
			4♠
4NT	dbl	pass	pass
5♦	dbl	redbl (snort)	pass
?			

What the — is happening? Thinking about it, he must mean the redouble to play, but I just don't believe we can make it. And what if by some weird handicapper logic he means it as SOS? Seven down redoubled at these stakes and I might have to go to work to pay for the losses. So, instead of going down in 5♦ redoubled for minus 200, I could give up 300 in 6♦. At least I'd be alive. Maybe I am a real chicken, but I bid 5♥. This also gets doubled and The Horse pulls to 6♦ amidst guffaws, sneezes, curses and other horribly disgusting noises.

NORTH
♠ J 8 6 5
♥ A 8 7 6
♦ A Q 8 2
♣ 3

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ Q 10 4 3
♦ J 10 9 5 4
♣ A Q 8 6

Harry has a right to be upset. The lead is a spade. I ruff it and lead a low trump to the eight. My idea is to lead a heart off dummy through the four-spade bidder's doubleton nine or jack. Eventually I can pin his honor by leading the queen from my hand. Then, after two spade plays, I exhaust my left-hand opponent's spades. I will lead a club from dummy and stick in the eight, losing a club and a heart for down one. Here is the whole hand:

NORTH
♠ J 8 6 5
♥ A 8 7 6
♦ A Q 8 2
♣ 3

WEST
♠ 7 3
♥ K J 2
♦ 7 6 3
♣ K J 9 7 4

EAST
♠ A K Q 10 9 4 2
♥ 9 5
♦ K
♣ 10 5 2

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ Q 10 4 3
♦ J 10 9 5 4
♣ A Q 8 6

The stiff ♦K. How sickening, but at least it means I wouldn't have made five diamonds. However, after winning the king, my right-hand opponent is so happy that he switches to a heart. Later on, the guy on my left leads a club away from his king. Awful defense, down only one, but Harry the Horse takes it to heart and begins chewing me out for not remaining in 5♦ redoubled, which he is certain I would have made! Luckily the cards are dealt for the third hand before Harry can get too mean.

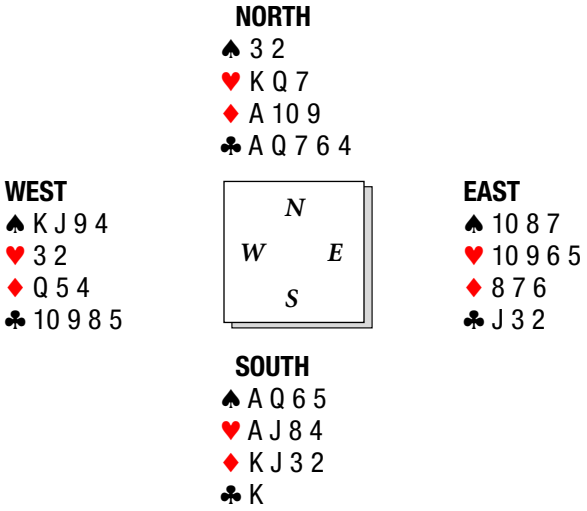
NORTH
♠ 3 2
♥ K Q 7
♦ A 10 9
♣ A Q 7 6 4

SOUTH
♠ A Q 6 5
♥ A J 8 4
♦ K J 3 2
♣ K

ME	HARRY THE HORSE
1NT	4NT
6NT	

Third deal. Unfavorable. Years of rubber bridge experience has taught me not to cower when the going gets rough. So I stick to my style of hogging the hand and the auction proceeds smoothly to a small slam. Okay, Zee, I say to myself, now give this Horse guy something to write home about.

The ♣10 is led. Planning the play, I can see eleven tricks if I misguess the diamond suit, and twelve if I guess the location of the queen or if the spade finesse works. Is there anything better than one of two finesses? What if the clubs are 4-3? That would mean four club tricks, two diamonds, four hearts, and one spade for eleven sure winners. Then again, if lefty has to win the fourth club, he could be forced into leading a spade or a diamond.



I win the club lead in hand, cash three rounds of hearts ending in dummy, and when I see my left-hand opponent show out, I smile secretly. Two top clubs, and a third round puts lefty on play to lead into one of my tenaces. That means plus 1440 or a fast twenty-eight hundred dollars back to the good guys. What a pleasant way to make a living! I feel like ordering champagne, but I have a strong feeling The Horse drinks beer, probably from a trough.

♠ K J 4 3 2 ♥ K ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ Q J 10 3

Fourth deal. All vulnerable. Lefty opens the bidding one club. The Horse overcalls one heart and righty bids one notrump. I pass with my ten points because of my misfit and the opener passes. Now The Horse re-enters the picture with two diamonds. The Horse has a lot of hearts and diamonds, and if you make a quick assessment of the point count around the table, the opener has thirteen, righty at least seven, me ten, so The Horse can't have more than ten himself.

I pass two diamonds but lefty fights further with three clubs which come around to me.

Should I double or not? If I double they might pick up my whoosis, finesse my whatsis and more. In a rubber bridge game you have to remember your worst opponent is often your partner. In short, I had The Horse over there. Staring at his weakish red two-suiter, he might be the type of Horse who pulls this double, especially in view of my previous efforts. So I pass, remembering the proverb, 'take the money'.

The opening lead is the singleton queen of spades and when dummy hits with a balanced Yarborough, I want to stick my head in the sands of Abu Dhabi and confess my sin of failing to double. Plus 300 instead of plus 800. O.K., not so bad money-wise, but in rubber bridge, when you fail to take advantage of situations like this, the gods of bridge do not forgive.

COOL HAND ZIA

All the best books on bridge, especially rubber bridge, have this piece of advice in common: if you want to be a winner, learn to accept your bad results with good humor. Especially if your partner is not a strong player, disasters are inevitable, and the sooner you accept them, the easier it is to prepare yourself mentally for the next hand. Imagine that you are playing for huge stakes at the Mayfair Club in New York. You are North, playing with a so-called 'expert' partner — so called chiefly by himself. East is a good player, prone to flights of fancy, while West is your friend and everybody's, Bob Hamman. Naturally, he is fresh from yet another World Championship victory (I wonder if it ever gets boring?) and he has just finished throwing magical dice to take your money at backgammon. Your hand is nothing special, but there is pride at stake as well as a lot of cash.

Vulnerable against not, you open 1♦, and the bidding starts slowly before going into orbit:

♠ A 4 3 2 ♥ 10 7 6 ♦ A K J 4 3 ♣ 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Hamman	*Zia*		
	1♦	pass	1♥
1♠	2♥	3♠[1]	6♥
6♠	dbl[2]	all pass	

1. Preemptive, in the modern style. 3♥ or 3♦ would be used to show value raises to 3♠.
2. Though you have first-round spade control, partner almost certainly has a void, so it would be risky to venture a forcing pass with such weak trump support. You have every reason to expect a juicy penalty as you double in even tempo. It is not done in the best circles to draw your finger symbolically across your throat while making a double that you hope partner won't remove!

You are wondering whether to lead the ♦K or your singleton club, when you realize to your horror that the bidding is not over. Partner is thinking about bidding 7♥. Surely he can't be... but he does! When this is passed round to Hamman, he doubles implacably, and you watch in a daze as your partner goes one down. This is the full deal:

NORTH
♠ A 4 3 2
♥ 10 7 6
♦ A K J 4 3
♣ 2

WEST
♠ K J 10 7 6
♥ 2
♦ 8 7 2
♣ K Q 9 7

EAST
♠ Q 9 8 5
♥ K Q
♦ 6 5
♣ J 8 6 4 3

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ A J 9 8 5 4 3
♦ Q 10 9
♣ A 10 5

If my partner had passed 6♠ doubled, we would still be taking tricks today — I calculate the penalty at 1400 on best defense. Bearing in mind my opening remarks, you may care to guess at my reaction.

Naturally, I did what I had to do. I jumped out of my chair with every intention of strangling the idiot opposite, but Bob Hamman managed to get in the way. Now, Bob is over six feet, and I don't know what he weighs, but it's a lot. When he gets in your way, it is best just to forget about where you were going. But I hope for the sake of South's health that I don't see him again for a while. There are times when being a winner is of secondary importance — vengeance is what matters!

SOME HORSE PLAYERS DIE BROKE

The Mayfair Club, New York, 12:30 a.m. I switch seats with a man on my right and face The Champ. Harry the Horse is safely positioned on my right and a woman by the name of Tilly, who I am told doubles you only when she has you beat four tricks in her own hand, is on my left.

I actually knew The Champ from the Cavendish Club uptown, and had once discussed a few carding methods with him over mai tais in a Chinese restaurant.

While juggling some strange-looking coins that came out of his pocket, The Champ told me that if we ever found each other as partners at the rubber bridge table, I could trust his carding implicitly.

"A high card is encouraging, a low card is discouraging and requests a shift to dummy's weaker side suit.

"And an unusual card," he added, "says make an unusual shift." Very simple.

I was glad to finally have him for my partner, not so much

because he sounded like a good bridge player, but because I was worn out from being his opponent on the previous four deals:

♠ — ♥ Q 8 5 3 ♦ A 10 9 6 5 4 ♣ 10 5 4

Deal one. Neither side vulnerable. Put yourself in The Champ's position. It goes pass, pass, 1♠ to you. Say you pass. 1NT on your left, 3♥ on your right, 3♠ on your left. Now 4♣, on your right, 6♣ on your left. Double by your partner (me). What do you think the double means and what would you lead?

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Champ	*Horse*	*Me*	*Tilly*
	pass	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	3♥
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	6♣	dbl	all pass

Since you are looking at the ♦A and trump length, I, your partner, cannot have two aces, nor can I be looking at a legitimate set. Then why the double? Diamonds are the unbid suit and obvious strength of the defense. Since I must be staring at six spades (the opponents have revealed a 5-2 spade fit and you're void), my double should mean that I have a diamond entry, so don't be afraid to underlead your ace to me for a spade ruff.

NORTH *(The Horse)*
♠ 3 2
♥ 10 4 2
♦ J 7
♣ A Q J 7 6 3

WEST *(The Champ)*
♠ —
♥ Q 8 5 3
♦ A 10 9 6 5 4
♣ 10 5 4

EAST *(Me)*
♠ Q 9 8 7 6 4
♥ J 9
♦ K Q 8 3
♣ 2

SOUTH *(Tilly)*
♠ A K J 10 5
♥ A K 7 6
♦ 2
♣ K 9 8

A low diamond lead beats the slam pronto. But The Champ leads a trump. That's a very difficult way to get a ruff in my opinion, and my estimation of The Champ's game drops with this lead.

Declarer wins in dummy and leads a diamond. I go up with the king to give my partner a ruff. But no, The Champ overtakes with his ace to lead a second trump! The Champ must have come into some inheritance, I think, not caring for the setting trick. But declarer wins the second round of clubs in dummy, ruffs a diamond, and cannot get out of her hand except by leading spades. The Champ now ruffs the spade lead, and plays a heart to my jack and declarer's king. Tilly is endplayed again! She cannot reach dummy for a spade finesse without giving up a heart trick. That means down two, and my estimation of The Champ's game rises back up.

To be truthful, I admit that I did not double this hand, I only thought of it. I didn't believe The Champ would understand my double. But now that I saw him in action...

NORTH (*Tilly*)
♠ Q 7 6 4
♥ A 5 3
♦ A J 7 6 2
♣ 3

WEST (*Me*)
♠ A K 8
♥ K J 8 7 6
♦ Q 9 3
♣ 7 5

Second deal, favorable. I open 1♥, Tilly doubles, The Champ bids 1♠ and The Horse leaps unsportingly to 5♣. (Where were you when you were my partner, Horse?)

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Champ	*Horse*	*Me*	*Tilly*
		1♥	dbl
1♠	5♣	all pass	

I led the ♠K. The Champ drops the ten, declarer, the three. The ten is a most unusual card. Can you decipher it?

Suddenly my rendezvous in a Chinese restaurant comes into play. I review our brief conversation. A high card says continue. A low card says shift to dummy's weakness (hearts). And an unusual card says shift to the strong suit or make an unusual shift (in this case, diamonds).

The ten, however, is neither a normal high-card nor an unusual card, since the jack is available as a signal. I stew for a bit and wonder if declarer can hold the jack and partner's play of the ten is for a diamond shift. But if The Champ has the diamond king, what can declarer hold?

Jack and one spade, at least three hearts (or my partner would have raised me)... Oh well, can't sit here all night. I shift to a diamond.

I was on the right track — kind of. I should have reasoned that if declarer held two spades and four hearts, he was void in diamonds and I must cash our second spade trick before exiting. The full hand was:

NORTH *(Tilly)*
♠ Q 7 6 4
♥ A 5 3
♦ A J 7 6 2
♣ 3

WEST *(Me)*
♠ A K 8
♥ K J 8 7 6
♦ Q 9 3
♣ 7 5

EAST *(The Champ)*
♠ 10 9
♥ Q 10 9 4 2
♦ K 10 8
♣ J 6 2

SOUTH *(Horse)*
♠ J 5 3 2
♥ —
♦ 5 4
♣ A K Q 10 9 8 4

Another reason to continue spades! The Champ had stolen their spade suit in the bidding and was signaling a simple come-on for a ruff! How could I not cash my tricks? Even my nine-year old nephew who does not play bridge would have continued!

Third deal. Unfavorable. The Champ makes a bid that has never occurred before in bridge, at least in my experience:

♠ K 5 4 3 2 ♥ K ♦ J 8 6 4 ♣ 7 5 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Champ	*Horse*	*Me*	*Tilly*
			1♣
pass	1♥	pass	2♣
2♦	2♥	2♠	4♥
dbl	pass	?	

The auction begins 1♣ by Tilly on my left, pass, 1♥ by Horse on my right; 2♣ on my left, then 2♦ by The Champ who couldn't overcall one diamond on the first round!

Horse rebids 2♥, and I slip in 2♠ just in case of a double fit. Next comes 4♥ on my left. The Champ doubles. Luckily I do not get any bright ideas. I stay out of The Champ's way and pass the hand out in 4♥ doubled. The Champ leads about seven aces and six kings and we collect ten tricks for 1400.

His hand is:

♠ A 8 ♥ A 9 5 4 ♦ K 7 5 3 ♣ A 6 4

Mind you, not only do we take all our high cards, but The Horse gives us a few tricks that we don't deserve. You see, he gets this phone call in the middle of the hand to the effect that he has just won a thirty-thousand dollar trifecta in the feature race at Santa Anita. The Horse is so overjoyed that he can hardly concentrate on the play, so a few extra thousand slip quietly over to The Champ and me. Meanwhile, Tilly, who is normally quite happy about Horse's racetrack success, is having a stroke.

♠ 5 2 ♥ J 10 7 ♦ Q 10 8 5 ♣ A K J 2

Fourth deal, all vulnerable, Champ passes in first seat, Horse passes, and riding high on plus 1400, I pass. Tilly opens 1♦ in fourth, Horse responds 1♥, and Tilly rebids 1♠, passed around to me:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Tilly	*Champ*	*Horse*	*Me*
	pass	pass	pass
1♦	pass	1♥	pass
1♠	pass	pass	?

I can see a split 40-point deck when I hear one. Fourth hand partscores receive an extra hundred points in Chicago scoring. If I can push them to 2♠ down one, or even go one down myself, it would be well worth it. Anyway, macho guys don't let the opponents play the one-level, so I balance with 1NT. There is a resounding double on my left. Oh no! Tilly has got me!

NORTH *(The Champ)*
♠ Q 8 6 3
♥ 5 4 2
♦ 3 2
♣ Q 9 6 5

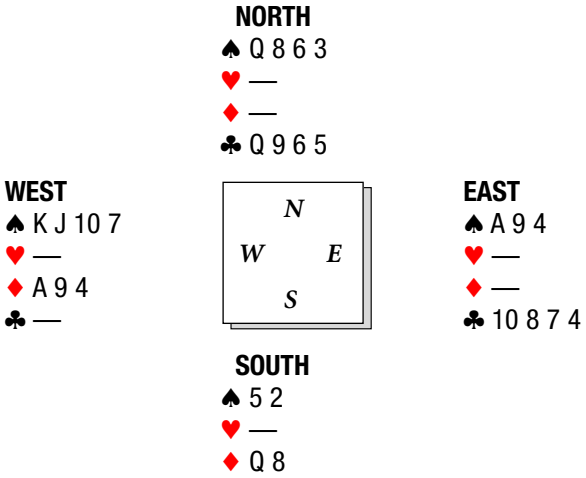
WEST *(Tilly)*
♠ K J 10 7
♥ A Q 3
♦ A K J 9 4
♣ 3

EAST *(The Horse)*
♠ A 9 4
♥ K 9 8 6
♦ 7 6
♣ 10 8 7 4

SOUTH *(Me)*
♠ 5 2
♥ J 10 7
♦ Q 10 8 5
♣ A K J 2

The diamond king is led. When I see the dummy, I wonder how a rubber bridge pro like myself could make such an error. But I promise you, I would make the same bid again if it came up tomorrow. Sometimes, you run into a bad dummy. And this is a bad dummy. Frankly, I wonder if I will take even one trick!

Tilly switches to the ♥A at Trick 2 and continues hearts. On the fourth round, I discard a club from my hand and a diamond from dummy. Next, The Horse comes through me in diamonds to the jack, followed by the ace. Two more pitches to make from dummy in this position:

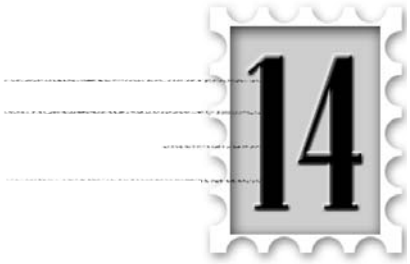


It would not seem so vital at pairs (a bottom is a bottom), but at two dollars a point, holding your losses is as important as reaping profits with penalty doubles.

If I pitch two clubs from dummy, the opponents can cash only three spade tricks, and I will be down four, minus 1100. If Tilly fails to find the spade shift, however, I will make three club tricks and a diamond trick in my hand for minus 800.

Even down 800 is not my cup of tea, so I throw two spades from dummy, making like a guy with the ace of spades. I am now in danger of taking only two tricks and giving back everything that I won on the previous deal. Luckily though, Tilly produces a fourth diamond and I get out for only minus 500.

The chukker is over and the bad news is that I must face Tilly for the next four deals. The good news is that the racing results are still coming in from the West Coast and The Horse is still my opponent...



BRIDGING THE GOLF

My latest passion is golf. I'm crazy about it — I read magazines about it; I ask questions about it; I practice my swing; and I play.

Mostly, I play. I play wherever I can, partly to get better and because I love it. Whenever you think you have it mastered — like the game of bridge — it reminds you that you don't know so much after all.

I started playing golf because I bet Benito Garozzo that I would be a fifteen handicap golfer within one year of starting to play. To test my boast, we organized a match to be played during the next Nationals. Benito is a pretty good golfer, so I needed to practice.

This preamble is so that you understand that when I walked into the New York Cavendish Club for the rubber bridge game last Saturday, I had already played my eighteen holes for the day. I had been playing with Seymon Deutsch, whom you all know as a world champion of bridge (his friends know him as an all-time world

champion 'great guy'), and with Don Johnson, the movie actor (a friend of Seymon's), whose swing proved to be as deadly as his draw. I suffered great frustration losing to both of them, and was in the mood to take refuge in a game where I thought that at least I was more in control. My opponents were a mixture:

1. Alex, a successful jeweler from Brooklyn by way of Tel Aviv, who plays craftily to make up for his technical lapses.

2. Bogie, a famous New York rubber bridge player, whose card skill is as good as his bidding methods are outdated.

3. Chang, a very tough player, made more so by the fact that his wife just gave birth to a son. Now he has three mouths to feed.

On the first deal, I cut Bogie and picked up this hand, still thinking about my drive on the last hole.

♠ K Q ♥ A Q J 2 ♦ A K J 7 5 ♣ 8 4

A good start. The bidding proceeded with neither side vulnerable:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Me	*Chang*	*Bogie*	*Alex*
1♦	pass	2♣	pass
2♥	pass	2♠	pass
2NT	pass	3NT	pass
6NT	pass	pass	dbl
all pass			

Alex found a lead-directing double with:

♠ 5 4 2 ♥ 8 7 5 3 ♦ 6 4 2 ♣ K Q 7

Do you agree with his bid? I'm not sure I do, but instead of him being punished, his partner gaily led the ace of clubs to take the first three tricks. Dummy had:

♠ A J 9 6 ♥ K 9 ♦ Q 8 ♣ J 10 9 6 3

and on any other lead I would have made thirteen tricks.

Oh, well, even guys with bad swings can win a hole — and picking up another opening bid soothed the pain. This time I held:

♠ K 10 ♥ 10 9 4 2 ♦ A K J 7 ♣ K J 6

We were vulnerable against not and the bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Me	*Chang*	*Bogie*	*Alex*
	pass	pass	2♠
dbl	3♦	4♥	all pass

I liked the way the bidding had gone and felt I was putting down a suitable dummy after Alex led a diamond. Bogie won and played a trump to his queen and Alex's king. Alex played another diamond, won by Bogie. The next heart was won by Chang's ace. Now Chang almost lazily played a spade over to Alex's ace, and Alex returned a third diamond, trumped by Chang! The four hands were:

NORTH *(Zia)*
♠ K 10
♥ 10 9 4 2
♦ A K J 7
♣ K J 6

WEST *(Alex)*
♠ A Q 9 6 4
♥ K 3
♦ 5 3 2
♣ 10 4 2

EAST *(Chang)*
♠ J 8 7 2
♥ A 6 5
♦ 9 8
♣ 9 7 5 3

SOUTH *(Bogie)*
♠ 5 3
♥ Q J 8 7
♦ Q 10 6 4
♣ A Q 8

Look at Chang — on a hand where everyone else would routinely have bid 4♠ (for minus 500), he gives a lead directional (!) three-diamond bid (for a third-round ruff), and sells out happily and expectantly to 4♥. What could a normal bidder like me say?

The third hand came along. I was in the dream position (non-vulnerable vs. vulnerable), and now I was steaming. The good news was that I had a chance to try something; the bad news was that I had a near-Yarborough:

♠ Q J 9 8 2 ♥ Q 7 ♦ 8 5 ♣ Q 10 8 7

After two passes I tried 3♠, and closed my eyes. Luckily I caught Chang with this monster:

♠ A K ♥ A J 10 5 ♦ A K 4 3 ♣ K 5 3

and he was forced to bid 3NT, the second-best contract. Here was the whole hand:

NORTH *(Alex)*
♠ 10 7 3
♥ K 9 8 3 2
♦ 10 9 7 6
♣ 4

WEST *(Bogie)*
♠ 6 5 4
♥ 6 4
♦ Q J 2
♣ A J 9 6 2

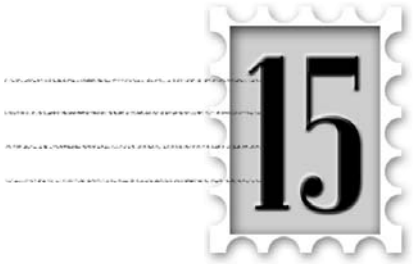
EAST *(Zia)*
♠ Q J 9 8 2
♥ Q 7
♦ 8 5
♣ Q 10 8 7

SOUTH *(Chang)*
♠ A K
♥ A J 10 5
♦ A K 4 3
♣ K 5 3

Bogie, who has seen my three-bids before, led the six of clubs and Chang, reading from the fourth-best lead that I had four clubs, cashed the ace-king of diamonds.

Now his estimated 'count' told him that I had a singleton heart (he thought my shape was 6-1-2-4) and he finessed into my queen as surely as Peking duck heads for a pancake. Finally something came back to the good guys.

But after the game, I started thinking how none of these successful actions was the 'book' or 'recommended' action and yet, all had been so decisively 'winning'. Maybe, after all this time, I don't really know as much about this game as I thought. I guess it's all in the swing — or is it?



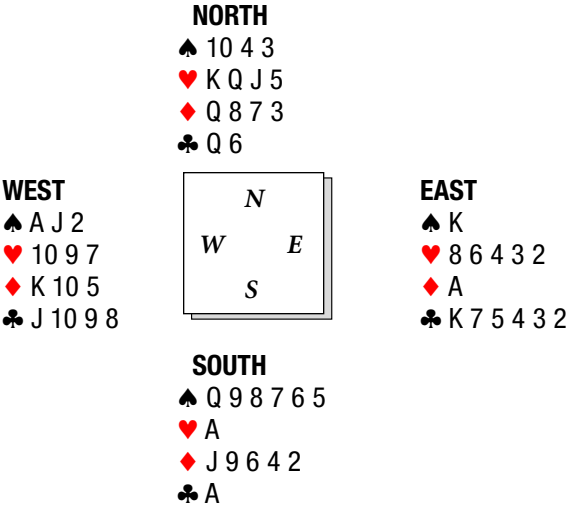
LOVE AND THE SINGLE HORSE

The toughest game in New York begins each Thursday evening at exactly 8:00 p.m. at the Honors Club on 74th and Madison. With some of the biggest names in the sport as regular players, the prize in this game is not so much money as glory and the respect of one's peers.

The game is open to all comers, in that anyone who wants to play and can afford the stake is allowed to sit down, but it is a rare occasion when an unknown fish appears to swim against the sharks. This particular evening was one of those occasions — more rare because the newcomer was a lady whose elegance contrasted sharply with the T-shirts and designer stubble of the regulars.

Her first partner was Harry the Horse, whose passion for the

game of bridge is matched only by the size of his bets at the race track. A little in awe of his new partner, Harry overbid the North cards badly on this deal:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West led the ♣J. The kibitzers, keen to see whether the newcomer could hold her own in this exalted company, could see at least five losers — two diamonds and three trumps. The contract was hopeless, and the kibitzers sat back comfortably in their chairs to watch the slaughter. Thanking Harry politely for his dummy, the lady called for the ♣Q, covered by the king and won by the ace.

South cashed the ♥A, then led a diamond towards the queen. West, who was sure that the ♥A was a singleton but that the ♣A was not, thought that declarer might win in dummy with the ♦Q and discard some losing clubs on the hearts. He therefore went up with the king of diamonds! East, with a snarl, overtook perforce with the ♦A and returned a club. South ruffed and gently placed the ♠Q on the table.

West, normally one of the toughest players in New York City, was by now in a state of helpless confusion. If he had paused to reflect for even a moment, he would have reasoned that declarer had started with five diamonds, one club and one heart. Therefore, she had to have six spades, and it could not possibly be right to play the ♠A on this trick. But West's mind was in turmoil, and he could see only that he had blown a diamond trick and would need to recover it by giving East a ruff in diamonds. So he went up with the ace of spades! For a second time, East's honor fell with a mighty crash, and five losers had suddenly become three. Four spades, bid and made.

The kibitzers sat back up in their seats, exchanging murmurs of admiration. The lady accepted these with a slight smile. And the Horse? The Horse was in love...

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

New York these days is where the action is. I visit a large number of countries every year, but when I feel like an orgy of bridge, when those pangs of desire — my junkie-like cravings for the greatest addiction of them all — overcome me, I fly to New York and get my fix!

First there's rubber bridge action at the Mayfair, Regency and Cavendish clubs. The stakes I play range from fifty cents to two dollars a point. The players range from unbelievably bad to unbelievably good (me).

Next there's a high-stake IMP game four times a week, either at the Mayfair or Cavendish Club. The players play eight-board matches (cutting randomly for teams) and the stake is usually fifty dollars an IMP player, with a 4-IMP bonus for winning the match.

Finally, in between these various games are the great dinners, where heated post-mortems take place. Mostly we discuss disasters and sympathy hands (deals in which players have made mistakes and are looking for kind words).

The characters are, without a doubt, unique and range from sophisticated art dealers to antique jail birds to Scandinavian night-school students to underground characters of the gambling world, straight out of Damon Runyan's *Guys and Dolls*, to respectable businessmen and not-so-respectable businessmen. There is even one Israeli terrorist (at least his partners maintain he's one).

All in all, if you couple the above with a very high standard of play, you've got the scenario. A few hands from these games stay in my mind; others, like jokes, seem very hard to remember.

First: You are playing high-stake rubber bridge at the Cavendish and you pick up this hand:

♠ 4 3 ♥ A Q J 8 5 4 ♦ Q 4 ♣ 9 8 7

You hear 1NT on your right and you stick in a two heart bid. LHO says three hearts, partner passes and RHO bids 3NT. Your LHO passes and you're about to make your lead when partner pulls out the RED CARD — Double — gulp. But RHO, a very tough Swedish internationalist, says Redouble — double gulp. Pass, pass, pass. Your lead...?

The good news and the bad news: the good news is that RHO has, as one of his claims to fame, a small case of the 2800 penalty he gave up in the semifinal of a world championship over the misunderstanding of a redouble. The bad news is that your partner just happens to be the Israeli terrorist that I talked about earlier — his last partner who did the wrong thing was my old Chinese friend Fred Chang, and after an altercation with the dreaded terrorist, he was last seen heading for the safety of Tiananmen Square!

The player on opening lead chose the ♥Q to find this layout:

NORTH *('Innocent' Dummy)*
♠ 9 8 7 6
♥ 6
♦ A J 10 8 7 5 3
♣ 4

WEST *(Soon to Vanish)*
♠ 4 3
♥ A Q J 8 5 4
♦ Q 4
♣ 9 8 7

EAST *(Israeli)*
♠ A K J 10 5
♥ 10 9 3
♦ 6
♣ J 10 3 2

SOUTH *(Swedish Guy)*
♠ Q 2
♥ K 7 2
♦ K 9 2
♣ A K Q 6 5

You can see that on a spade lead the defense takes the first eleven tricks for a penalty of 2800 (the Swede knew the number well), but on a heart lead declarer scores up eleven tricks for 1750, a swing of several thousand dollars.

What is the correct lead?

My opinion is that a spade stands out. The redouble with probably only one heart stopper smells of a good minor suit and apart from the fact that we might guess the wrong one if we led a minor, spades is closest to dummy's bid suit. At least we know partner should have four of them.

Anyway, the Swedish guy smiled, the Israeli scowled, and the guy who made the wrong lead — he disappeared. Believe me, he just vanished: he hasn't been seen in the club since — and who can blame him?

Let's pretend for a moment that evening you were invited to sit in for the guy who vanished. The group travels downtown to the Mayfair to join the IMP game. Soon you find yourself declaring against some expert competition:

NORTH
♠ Q 7 6 3
♥ 8 5
♦ K 9 5 4
♣ K Q 7

SOUTH
♠ A K J 5 4
♥ 9 2
♦ Q 8 3
♣ A 10 2

SOUTH	**NORTH**
1♠	3♠
4♠	

LHO plays the king and queen of hearts (they play ace from ace-king) and then switches to the J♦. How do you play?

What the — is going on? Why should West make the only switch for you to make this contract?

Obviously, if he is leading a singleton, you are dead anyway. So you must assume:

1. The ♦J is not a singleton.

2. Left to your own devices, you couldn't help but make the hand. What then is the diamond position?

By now you should have worked out the only explanation for this defense (assuming that your LHO is a good player — i.e., someone not making an inferior play). He must have precisely the J-10 doubleton.

That is the one combination that you would always pick up without his help (try it). It's a fun position and one where it pays to be a palooka when you defend.

Finally, I must slip in one hand from the *Bridge Today* Individual at Atlantic City, which, by the way, I thought was a great tournament, mostly because I won the very handsome first prize, but more so

because I feel that it opened the door to money bridge tournaments that have been much too long in coming. The anticlimax for those who said such a tournament would be full of cheats must have been enormous, as I heard of no unhappy incidents at all!

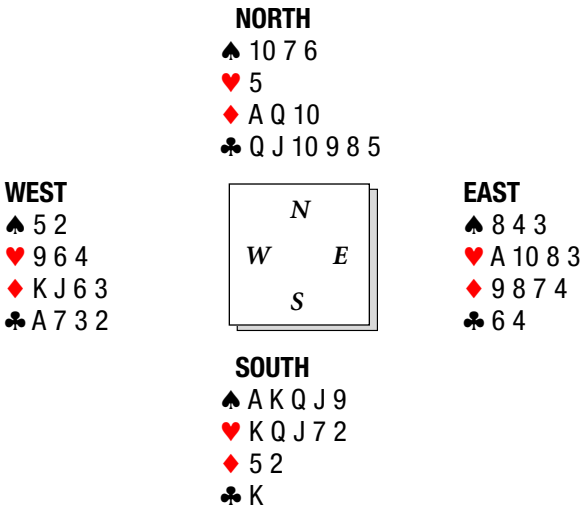
Sitting down opposite a partner who said he played hardly any system, I picked up in the North position, neither side vulnerable:

♠ 10 7 6 ♥ 5 ♦ A Q 10 ♣ Q J 10 9 8 5

WEST	NORTH *Me*	EAST	SOUTH *Partner*
			2♣
pass	3♣	pass	3♠
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	6♠	all pass	

The bidding:

The opening lead was a diamond. I watched as partner put in the queen and played a club to the king and West's ace. West returned the ♦K, declarer won and claimed when the trumps broke. The full



hand:

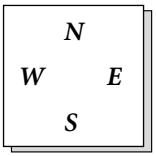
Maybe declarer should have made the hand by finessing the ♦10. West should certainly have switched to a heart, and maybe we should have been playing Blackwood but when did you last bid or make a slam off two aces after Blackwood? And then again, maybe I wouldn't have won first prize and shown that good guys can be lucky as well as good, and maybe I wouldn't have taken a week off to go to Las Vegas to take some more golf lessons so that maybe next time I could kill Benito. Benito, are you listening? I'm coming...

SMOKE ALARM

I gave up smoking some years ago, but until very recently I was relaxed about the whole affair — if people wanted to smoke at the bridge table, I didn't mind. Then, while I was playing rubber bridge on a recent visit to New York, something happened which made me want to consign tobacco and all who smoked it to the lowest circle of Hell. Follow this hand with me and tell me if you think I'm being unreasonable. This was the hand from my point of view as East:

N-S Vul.

NORTH *(Dummy)*
♠ 8 2
♥ A K 10 9
♦ 4 3
♣ A K 10 9 5



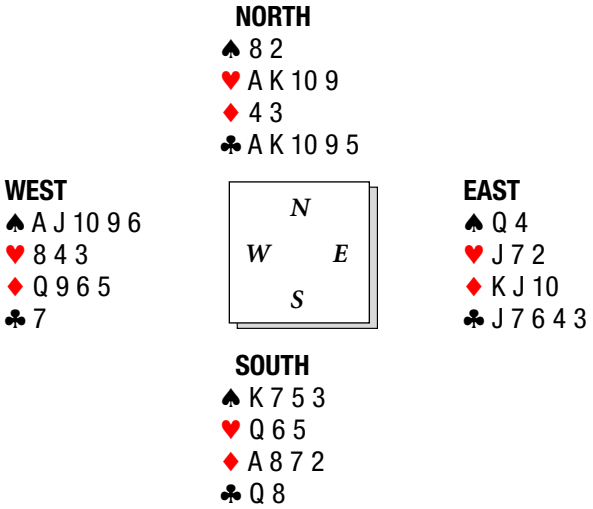
EAST *(Zia)*
♠ Q 4
♥ J 7 2
♦ K J 10
♣ J 7 6 4 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West led the ♠J, on which I played the queen to unblock, and declarer won with the king. South cashed the ♣Q, then led a second club on which West discarded a diamond. The declarer, a Wall Street wizard and a wonderful card player, now cashed dummy's ♥A and led a heart to his queen. He paused a moment in thought, then exited with a spade to my partner, whose original holding had been ♠AJ1095. West cashed three more rounds of spades, dummy discarding a diamond and two clubs. What would be your discards?

South has shown 11-12 points in the bidding, and has turned up with the king of spades and the queens of hearts and clubs. That is seven points, so his hand will include the ace of diamonds but not the queen. Now you can defend with open cards:

It was essential to persuade West to lead a diamond at this point.



So my first discard was the ♦K, with the twofold aim of getting partner to lead the suit, and causing declarer to think that I, not West, held the queen. I next threw a club, then the ♦J. Obediently, West switched to a diamond to my ten and declarer's ace. South sat back to reflect. I had shown up with two spades and five clubs, and my flamboyant discards in diamonds 'marked' me with ♦KQJ10. That

left room for only a doubleton heart, so a finesse of dummy's ten was in order. Confidently, South led a heart towards the table and...

While South had been pondering, my partner had turned to a side table where he kept his cigars and his lighter. He had put down his cards and lit up a vast Havana. He turned back to the bridge table just in time to see South lead the third round of hearts, and he discarded a diamond! South shrugged, went up with dummy's ♥K felling my jack, and claimed his contract with a bewildered air. Of course, my partner had left his last heart behind on the side table while he was occupied with his cigar. Now do you see why I don't approve of smoking at the bridge table?

GIVE ME A WEAKIE

The other day I was having an argument with a friend of mine who has a theory that it is often easier to declare a hand against a good player than a weak one. "Against a weak player," he says, "you can never depend on what he is doing on defense. He leaves you no inferences or clues to read the hand. But against a good player you can usually count on him to give his partner the correct signal and play the right theoretical card."

I disagree! Give me a weakie any day. It is true, good players leave clues. But they also play cards that leave you guessing, cards which a weaker defender would never think to play.

Recently, good defenders have been putting a hole in my wallet, as you're about to see. But first, to test the merit of my theory, try this problem.

My opponents were Bobby Wolff and Bob Hamman, who in my opinion are perhaps the two best examples of everything good about the game of bridge — they are gentlemen, great company and

incomparably skillful. Perhaps the only bad thing that I could say about them is that their joint fondness for eating too much sometimes carries over to the bridge table, resulting in their making a meal of their poor opponents — me this time.

NORTH
♠ A K J 10 x
♥ x
♦ A x
♣ A Q 10 x x

SOUTH
♠ Q
♥ 10 x x
♦ K Q J 9 x x x
♣ x x

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Wolff	*Zia*	*Hamman*	*Partner*
4♥	dbl	pass	5♦
pass	5♥	pass	6♦
all pass			

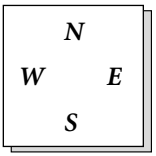
I bid the hand wrongly, but tell me, what should I have done? The good news is that 6♦ is a very good contract. The bad news is that you have to play it.

Wolff, West, leads the ♥A on which Hamman, East, drops the king. Wolff continues with the ♥Q. How do you play the hand? (The solution is at the end of the chapter.)

A few months ago I was playing at the Regency in New York when I cut Ronnie Blau for my partner. Ronnie is an accountant and bids and plays meticulously. Believe it or not, I too was once an accountant, but the only meticulous thing about me is the way I search for those picture cards when having a bad day at rubber bridge.

Ronnie and I bid the following two hands with a mixture of science and imagination, winding up in game in a reasonable 5-2 spade fit.

NORTH
♠ Q x
♥ Q x
♦ A x x x
♣ A J 10 x x



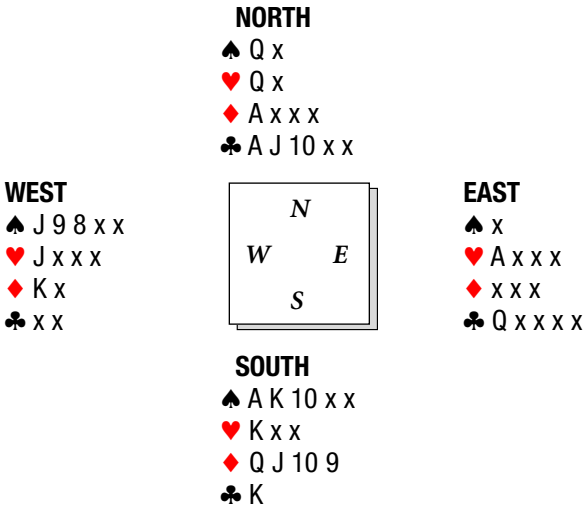
SOUTH
♠ A K 10 x x
♥ K x x
♦ Q J 10 9
♣ K

West, Paul Trent, who plays faster than Speedy Gonzalez and is a very tough rubber bridge player (he is know affectionately as the 'Weasel'), led a low heart to his partner's ace, and a heart was returned to dummy's queen. On fast analysis (all you have time for at rubber bridge), if the diamond finesse was off, I could afford only one spade loser. A 5-1 split could hurt me, so I led the spade queen and another spade, planning to put in the ten if East followed. When East showed out on the second round, I cursed silently and had to rethink. What would you do?

It appeared that I needed the diamond finesse. Still, I counted my sure tricks. Three spades, two hearts, one diamond and two club made eight. If I could ruff a club in my hand, I would have nine. Then, with more trumps than me, West would eventually be forced to ruff one of my losers and lead into my king-ten of spades. That looked safer and prettier than risking everything on a diamond finesse. But just in case, I could always play the ♦Q through my left-hand opponent. People normally cover with the king, if they have it.

I embarked on my plan, cashing the ♥K and the ♣K. Then I led the ♦Q to induce a cover. Trent followed low smoothly, so I went up

with the ace, cashed dummy's club ace and led a club to ruff in hand. This got overruffed. Down one.



I'm not sure, but I probably misplayed the hand. A better approach may have been to win the second trick with dummy's ♥Q, and lead a club to my hand. Cash the ♥K. Next a high spade from my hand and a low one to dummy's queen. If all follow, I give up a diamond (only a diamond ruff and heart ruff uppercut could defeat me — very obscure). When East shows out of spades, I continue my line. I cash the club ace and ruff a club. If West follows I am cold without the diamond finesse. If he overruffs, I fall back on the diamond finesse.

Whatever the technically correct line, the point I am trying rather long-windedly to make is this: what weak player do you know who wouldn't cover the ♦Q with the king, allowing me to make the hand easily? Only a top player like the Weasel would be up to *not* covering an honor with an honor. Strike one for good defenders.

On an another occasion, I was playing against my close friend Fred Chang at the Cavendish Club. He is a top class Taiwanese international who always smiles at the bridge table. (You'd smile too if you won as much money as he usually does.)

NORTH
♠ Q x x
♥ Q 9 x
♦ K Q 10 x
♣ x x x

SOUTH
♠ A K x x x
♥ A J x x x
♦ 9
♣ Q x

After Chang had overcalled diamonds in the West chair, I reached 4♠. Chang led the ace, king, and another club which I ruffed. It was about 2:00 a.m., and the brandy was flowing freely. So, without really going too deeply into the hand, I cashed the ace-king of trumps, all following, and led the ♦9 which Chang won with his ace.

(To digress a moment. The best line of play was probably: draw trumps ending in dummy and assume that the ♥K is onside by leading a heart to the jack and cashing the ace. If the king is not doubleton, lead a diamond up. If West has started with something like 2-2-6-3 shape, he goes up ace and is endplayed into leading a diamond from his jack. On dummy's king-queen-ten of diamonds I pitch three losing hearts.)

However, in real life, Chang won the ♦A and continued diamonds. To finesse or not to finesse? He may have been out of clubs, he may have held the ♥10 and not wanted to touch that suit, but one thing was certain: if he held the ♦J he was giving me a free finesse. The pure odds were probably six or two that he held the jack, and that I should put in the ten.

Question: should a Pakistani living in London accept a Greek gift from a Taiwanese rubber bridge player living in America at 2:00 a.m. over brandy at the Cavendish Club in New York?

A second digression — if you'll forgive me. In 1987, during a key match in World Championship round robin in Jamaica, Pakistan faced Taiwan, and I held:

♠ A 10 x x x ♥ — ♦ x x ♣ A Q 10 x x x

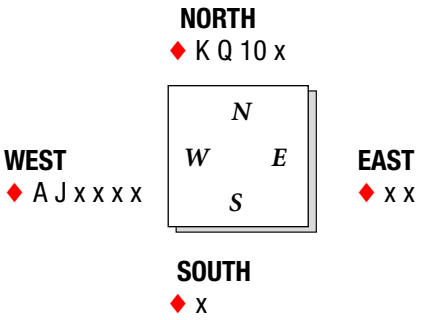
My left hand opponent opened 4♥, favorable, which in their methods showed the weaker of two four-heart openers (not that I thought to ask at the time — but I should have). My partner passed and my right-hand opponent bid 4NT (Key Card Blackwood). What would you do?

Trusting his bid for the moment, I passed. Lefty responded 5♦, one ace, and righty returned 5♥. The moment of truth — are you a man or a mouse? As I thought about the possibilities of going for 1100 or making a small slam in spades, I noticed a bee fly into the room and circle our bidding screen. The man on my right (who was in full view on my side of the screen) was absolutely inscrutable and had never even blinked during the bidding. Was he psyching with his 4NT call?

Suddenly the bee swooped down and stung him in the cheek. He still didn't blink! That was enough for me, baby. Anybody who didn't have his bid would have yelled out in pain. Only a genuinely big hand could have been enough comfort to dull the venom in a bee sting. I passed confidently with my massive hand and missed a cold slam.

♠ A 10 x x x ♥ — ♦ x x ♣ A Q 10 x x x

Instead of analyzing the effects of bee stings on Taiwanese Blackwood bidders, I should have analyzed the auction. Of course his 4NT bid was phony! He heard a one-ace reply and then signed off below slam. How many aces could responder to a 4♥, opener expect? Which brings us back to Fred Chang. If you still remember, I had led a singleton diamond to dummy's K-Q-10-x; Chang, who had overcalled the suit, rose with his ace and returned one. Was this the original layout?



I looked at Chang. He was not blinking either! So I stuck in the ♦10 and it was covered by the doubleton jack. Down one.

Without that diamond return I would have been forced to drop the jack and make a hand. But it took a good player to give me a chance to go wrong. Strike two for good defenders.

Recently I was playing in a rubber game with Jimmy Cayne as my partner. Jimmy had just come back from the Nationals after winning every event in sight and then some. He was full of confidence and playing very tough bridge.

After a 1NT-3NT auction, Cayne led a low heart. Here was the hand from declarer's point of view:

NORTH
♠ J 10 x
♥ A x x
♦ K 10 x x x
♣ J x

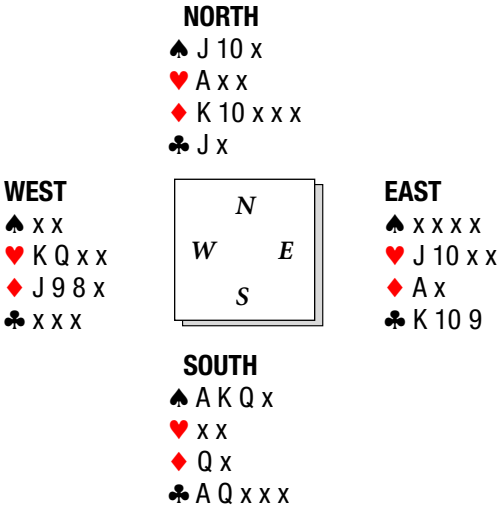
SOUTH
♠ A K Q x
♥ x x
♦ Q x
♣ A Q x x x

Declarer played low from dummy and I won the ten in the East chair. I returned the jack which everyone ducked, then a low heart to West's queen and dummy's ace. From the way Jimmy had played his cards, the hearts appeared to be divided 4-4 (although good players invariably conceal the fifth card in this position), but from my carding they appeared to be 5-3. What was the real position? Stay with me.

A low diamond was led from dummy to the queen and a diamond back to West's nine, dummy's ten and my ace. I returned the ♣10. Declarer recounted; he had eight tricks for sure — four spades, one heart, two diamonds and one club. Should he take the club

finesse or should he go up ace, and rely on diamonds to divide? Well?

Since I had not returned a heart, it was more likely than ever that hearts were 5-3. So, by going up ace, he had two chances. First, diamonds might be 3-3. Second, if they are not, he leads the club jack and if I hold the king (and the finesse had been onside), the club winner is established for the ninth trick. The whole hand was:

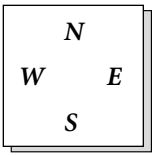


Unfortunately for declarer, the defense took a diamond, a club and three heart tricks for down one. Readers, please note — without sounding too immodest — that against bad players, declarer would have made this hand easily. My fourth heart would have been cashed when I was in with the ♦A, and no weak player would play the ♦9 on the second round of the suit from the West seat, let alone return the ♣10 from my side. Still want to declare against good players? Strike three.

Finally, remember that hand from the beginning of the chapter? Last chance to go back and change your mind. Okay, here it is:

NORTH
♠ A K J 10 x
♥ x
♦ A x
♣ A Q 10 x x

WEST
♠ x x
♥ A Q J x x x x
♦ —
♣ J x x x



EAST *(Hamman)*
♠ x x x x x
♥ K x
♦ 10 x x x
♣ K x

SOUTH
♠ Q
♥ 10 x x
♦ K Q J 9 x x x
♣ x x

After a four heart opening by West, South arrives in six diamonds. On the lead of the ♥A, Hamman, East, drops the king.

How many bad players would do that do you think?

I was dummy at the time, and watched when another heart was led. My partner ruffed with dummy's ace — as East followed! Then came a long pause. Finally, a low diamond to the king. Down one. Strike four. (The last one was a foul tip.)

To be quite honest, I was overly critical at the table. After all, it takes a lot of guts to play for a 4-0 split. However, why try to get you to ruff with dummy's ace? Naturally, to promote a trump trick.

My partner who, by the way, was the same fellow who suggested it is easier to play against good players than bad, answered "Had Hamman played a low heart at Trick 1, I would still have ruffed with dummy's ace at Trick 2. He could have held a small singleton just as easily as a singleton king."

In fact, if he had played low at Trick 1, I would have gone down without even thinking about the hand. Who plays for a 4-0 split? It was only because he played the king, that I even considered finessing in diamonds. But then I had to ask myself, why was he waving a red flag that he held a trump trick? Would a player as good as Hamman do that?

Well, he did. And with that I rest my case. What do you think? Is there still anyone there who would prefer to play against Bob Hamman? Not me. Give me a weakie any time.

THE BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

Do you look only at the bottom line or are you a poet? Is it the beauty of a hand that turns you on or the result?

When you declare a hand, you're all by yourself. You sink or swim according to your own ability. Defense, however is another ballgame.

You have a partner to deal with. You are, for a short moment in time, as wedded as a married couple, bound to each other; and, like moments with a loved one (which are not necessarily always fit for description in a family bridge magazine), the defense of a hand can be a beautiful experience or an embarrassing disaster, after which you may not wish to look your partner in the eye, let alone anywhere else.

Sometimes, however, you may derive pleasure from defensive maneuvers and plays where partner was not involved. And though he or she may ruin it for you in the end, the purity of your own part in the affair is enough to keep you content until the next time.

Recently, at the rubber bridge club, the following situation occurred, which demonstrates the part of the game that turns me on the most. I will describe it to you in the style of Terence Reese's *Over My Shoulder*.

The opponents have a partscore of sixty and are vulnerable. We are not vulnerable. Playing with a weak partner, I am dealt in third chair:

♠ 10 7 ♥ J 10 9 3 ♦ A Q 10 9 6 ♣ 9 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Zia		*Partner*	
		pass	pass
?			

Two passes to me. What should I do? With partner a passed hand, it looks very bad for our side. The opponents need only forty points to complete their vulnerable game. Therefore, my first objective is to push them as high as possible (without getting doubled along the way). My second objective will be to defeat them, of course. The strongest hand at the table is on my left, and I'd like to make him start bidding as high as possible. Also, keeping mind the second objective, defeating them, it is important to mention diamonds for a lead from partner rather than resort to any strange and perverted psychics such as a three-club opening (something I might use when really desperate). So I begin with 3♦, and hope for the best.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Zia		*Partner*	
		pass	pass
3♦	dbl	4♦	4♠
?			

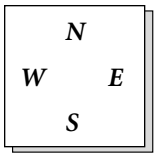
Partner has done his part with a sexy push to 4♦. (I would have preferred it if South had bid 4♥ rather than 4♠, but you can't have everything.) Is it time for a sacrifice? Absolutely not. The opponents will merely double five diamonds to achieve an equal or better score than their game. Our first job is done. They have been pushed to the game level when a partscore of forty would have sufficed.

Chalk up plan number one as a success. Now I must choose an opening lead.

What about a diamond? Just because partner raised diamonds does not mean he has the king. Don't punish him for pushing the enemy around. Although he may hold the king, and it may sometimes be necessary to cash two (three?) diamond tricks immediately, the odds favor a slower approach when the opponents have been coerced into their contract. In short, there's no indication in the bidding that we should panic; therefore, I start passively with the ♥J. Dummy comes down.

NORTH
♠ A Q 6 4
♥ A 7 6 2
♦ 7 4 3
♣ A 8

WEST
♠ 10 7
♥ J 10 9 3
♦ A Q 10 9 6
♣ 9 5



Declarer, quite a good player, thinks it over — often a sign that we have good defensive chances — and I take this time to reconstruct declarer's hand, even on the little information that I have. He must hold four or five spades (not six or he would have opened with a Weak Two-bid). His heart holding is unknown. He probably has a couple of diamonds since partner raised only to the four-level and might have jumped to 5♦ with four-card support. His club length must be at least three, giving partner at most a six-card club suit. With seven of them partner would have started the auction with a preempt. In fact, even with six clubs in this situation, partner would have opened 3♣, so, for now, I give declarer at least a four-card club suit.

He wins the heart lead in dummy with the ace. Partner follows with the eight, declarer the deuce. Is there anything I must plan for immediately? Not much with my weak hand except perhaps to false-card a bit. The three diamond opening may have declarer worried about bad splits and there is no reason not to continue this distrib-

utional masquerade with a few falsecards along the way. If nothing else, I might scare the guy a little.

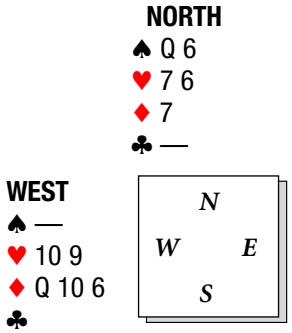
So, when declarer leads the ♠A off dummy, I drop the ten. Maybe he plans to run clubs and discard dummy's diamonds. If he stops drawing trumps after one round, I can ruff in on the third club play... but no, he gives me a sidelong glance and continues a spade to the jack. When I follow, he smiles as if to say, you can't fool me.

Next comes a club from his hand toward dummy's ace-eight. Undaunted, I play the ♣9 as if I held the queen-nine doubleton. If could be that his club suit is not solid, perhaps K-J-10-x. If he plans to finesse on the way back, the nine might make him think twice.

He wins the ace and leads the eight, partner following low. Declarer slips in the jack. My falsecarding is not doing me much good. I follow low, but who can blame me for trying every little decoy?

Unfortunately, this scientific declarer plays by the book odds rather than by watching my spot cards. Next comes the club king from the South hand and, unless he is hiding the queen, it looks like I was right about the K-J-10-x holding. I pull out the ♦6 from my hand for a discard, then put it back and play the ♦9. Not that the signal is important, but there's something about the ♦6 that seems ominous, or perhaps I've been reading too much Géza Ottlik recently; but in either case, and in accordance with my general principles of life, it can't be right to let go of my only low diamond when I have a big one to spare. Declarer discards a diamond from dummy on the club king, then exits a heart.

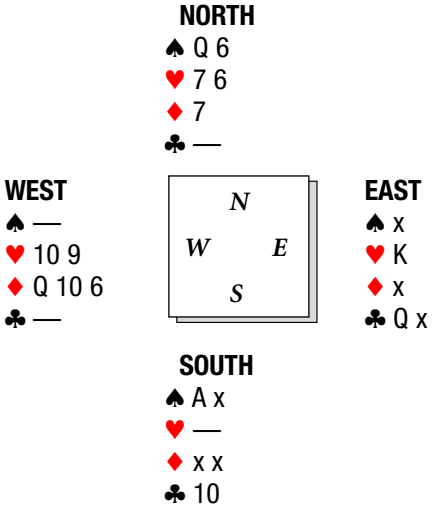
I play low while partner wins the queen. At last a picture is emerging. Partner started with king-queen third of hearts, declarer a doubleton. Before I can analyze much more, partner has the ♦J on the table. Declarer plays the king and I win with the ace. Good thing that I didn't lead diamonds. Since I am now on lead, I have the luxury of being able to sit back and think. With two tricks in for the defense, this is the position that I see:



It's reconstruction time. What is declarer's shape? If he started with 5-2-3-3 shape, he will lose another diamond and ruff the third one in dummy to make his contract. If he started with 5-2-2-4 shape, he is cold as well. So, by necessity, I assume that he started with only four spades. The relevant possibilities are 4-2-3-4 and 4-2-2-5. No, if he is 4-2-2-5, it won't matter what I play. He can ruff a club with dummy's spade queen and draw partner's last trump. The only chance is that he originally held 4-2-3-4, or to be precise:

♠ A K J x ♥ x x ♦ K x x ♣ K J 10 x

The position in my mind:

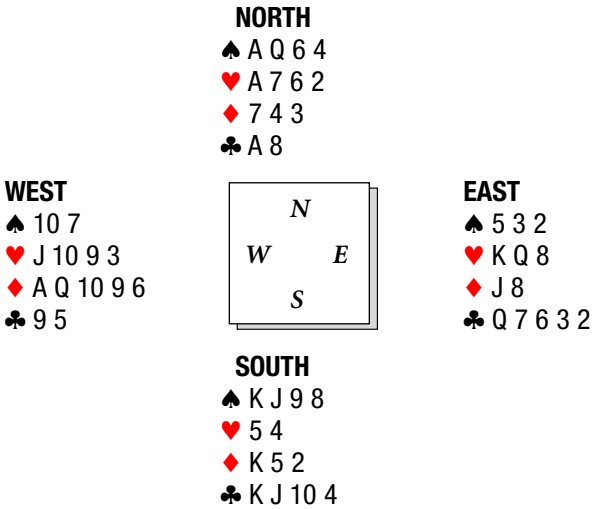


Now what happens if I cash a high diamond or play a heart?

Declarer will crossruff two hearts in his hand and two minor-suit cards in dummy. That's four tricks for declarer — no good. Then I see it! The zinger! Since only a trump play will cut his four tricks to three, and since partner holds the only trump in the hands of the defense, I have to get him in to play it. So I lead the precious ♦6, hoping (with two-to-one odds against me) that partner has the ♦8.

As soon as I make the play, it should be over for me, as I have done my all on the hand. I have preempted, led the heart jack, falsecarded in trumps, falsecarded in clubs, discarded a high diamond while holding on to the six, and returned the six at the climactic moment. I am satisfied with myself — not a common feeling — or at least I should be, whether or not partner produces the ♦8.

Did he have it, you ask? Okay, you non-purists out there! If you must know, partner did win with the eight. Satisfied now? Happy ending? Not really. Because after winning the trick, partner looked around then let out a happy smile as he tried to cash his ♥K!



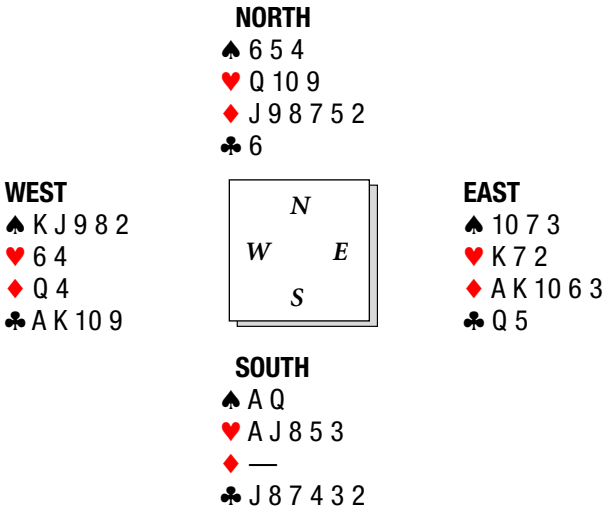
Would you have said that it doesn't matter? Would you have been so pure in your heart that you could forgive your partner his innocence and be satisfied by your own artistry? Could you say as the English do, "Nasty setback, partner," or would you (as I reluctantly admit I did) gently, but firmly, grab the idiot sitting across the table by his throat?

THE HORSE GOES SOUTH

Any keen golfer will tell you that putting balls into ashtrays on the carpet is a very serious business. It was annoying to be interrupted by the telephone, but I was ready to forgive the caller when he said, "Can you be at the club around two o'clock? Harry the Horse is back in town!"

Harry the Horse, like his Damon Runyan-created namesake, is a professional backer of racehorses. There the similarity with Runyan's character ends, for Harry is a pleasant man with a fund of stories and, of course, plenty of solid racing tips. He picks winners with the effortless ease with which Tony McCoy rides them, and when he is in town the stakes at the bridge game have a habit of soaring. On this particular afternoon, he had placed an enormous wager on a filly called 'Nashville Queen', and so confident was he that most of the club had put its money where his mouth was. I don't know exactly how enormous his stake was — suffice to say that his bets are as terrifying to his bookmakers as his bridge can be to his partners.

Unlike his racing gambles, Harry's ventures at the bridge table are often disastrous. On the racecourse, he will make up his mind which horse to back and stick to it, which is not necessarily a good idea at the card table. This was the second deal of a Chicago:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			Harry
		1♦	2♣
dbl	all pass		

West led the ♦Q, and the defenders continued diamonds whenever possible, giving Harry no chance to establish tricks in hearts before losing trump control. Four down. Minus 1100. Harry looked like a man who'd backed a horse at ten to one and found it still running at half past three, but he had only himself to blame for this disaster.

It is usually correct, when warned by a penalty double sitting over your weak trump holding, to run to a safer spot if you can. Why Harry did not retreat to hearts I will never know — perhaps he was thinking more of the racecourse Daily Double than West's more painful variety.

The next deal was a 'ghoulie' — appropriately enough, for the time was late in October, but the term is used to describe a deal in which the distribution is freakish, as if the cards had been dealt goulash-style:

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ J 10 7 6 5 2
♥ —
♦ 7 6 2
♣ A 9 8 5

WEST
♠ K
♥ 8 3
♦ A K 9 8
♣ Q J 10 7 3 2

EAST
♠ —
♥ K Q 10 6 5 4
♦ Q J 10 5 4 3
♣ 4

SOUTH
♠ A Q 9 8 4 3
♥ A J 9 7 2
♦ —
♣ K 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST *Harry*	SOUTH
			1♠
2♣	2♠	5♥	dbl
pass	5♠	6♦	6♠
pass	pass	7♦	pass
pass	7♠	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

The usual philosophy on freak deals is to 'bid one more', and everyone except West was obviously a follower of that principle. North might have passed 5♥ doubled, but perhaps Harry would have learned from his previous experience and retreated to 6♦ anyway. When Harry pressed on over 6♠, South's pass was forcing and promised a diamond control, and North showed courage with his bid of 7♠. The grand slam was cold, despite North-South's combined nineteen high card points, and Harry lost a record thirty-nine points on the four-deal Chicago. Unlucky? Yes, but he didn't seem to be in too much pain. A few moments later, he watched Nashville Queen storm home to win by a couple of lengths. I don't know how much he won — but he's the only person I've ever seen lose one of the biggest Chicagos in history, and still come up smiling.

DINNER WITH A TERRORIST

The Sunday game at the Town Club in New York is unique. The players are among the best in the world so the stakes are high, with ego as well as money on the line. A consoling tradition is that the winners of the last Chicago are the hosts for dinner — with the wine chosen often a reflection of those last four deals. On one visit I cut Fred Chang for the final Chicago, a born winner at money bridge. Our opponents were the great Israeli Sam Lev — sometimes called 'The Terrorist' for his reaction to his partner's mistakes — and the legendary Harry the Horse, fresh from his recent triumph in the prestigious Spingold tournament.

A small minus when our opponents made a partscore on the first deal was followed by a much larger one when Sam and Harry made a small slam — vulnerable, needless to say — on the second hand. We were fifteen points down already with just two hands to go — it looked as though we would be bought dinner, but at those stakes it looked as though we would need it! Our opponents came

out swinging on the third deal as well, for Harry the Horse opened with a weak 2♠ and was raised to 3♠ as a preemptive maneuver by his partner. Fortunately for us, Harry then broke discipline with a bid of 4♠, strictly taboo in the best circles. After we had doubled and collected a penalty of 800, the Terrorist nearly burst a blood vessel as he pointed out in graphic terms the folly of his partner's actions. But we were still 700 points behind with one deal to play:

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ A Q J 2
♥ A J 10 2
♦ K Q 4 2
♣ J

WEST
♠ 10 9 8 7 6
♥ 9 4 3
♦ J 10 6 3
♣ 8

EAST
♠ —
♥ 8 7 5
♦ 9 8 7 5
♣ A K Q 9 6 3

SOUTH
♠ K 5 4 3
♥ K Q 6
♦ A
♣ 10 7 5 4 2

WEST *Lev*	**NORTH** *Chang*	**EAST** *Harry*	**SOUTH** *Zia*
			1♣
pass	1♦	pass[1]	1♠
pass	2♥	pass[2]	2NT
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
pass	4NT	dbl[3]	pass
pass	redbl	all pass	

1. Slow.
2. Slower.
3. Harry had been dying to bid his club suit throughout the auction, hence his previous slow passes. Now, bursting with pride, he devised a brilliant way to show his suit. Surely an 'impossible' double of Blackwood would pinpoint an unusual lead to his partner, and what could be more unusual than clubs?

Alas for Harry, we rubber bridge players will have nothing to do

with modern conventions such as ROPI, where a redouble would show no aces. I passed 4NT doubled round to Chang, who was delighted to redouble for blood. When Lev, not in tune with his partner's brilliant notion, found a heart lead, we scored a brisk 1520 and won an eight-point Chicago. Of course, if Harry had simply passed over 4NT, we would have bid to the excellent but doomed 6♠, as The Terrorist — beside himself now — was not slow to point out. His steady flow of invective, though, did nothing to dampen the exquisite taste of the Petrus we ordered for dinner.

Destination 3

Europe

COMPUTER — TERMINAL

First stop, Geneva — the World Olympiad — we've come here to play against the best players in the world — some are old enemies, others are fresh gunslingers looking for blood. And whom do I find myself up against? Hamman? No. Chagas? No.

Well, would you believe a dumb computer? Or maybe not so dumb...

We were all in one room, twenty of the top players in the world, sitting at our computer terminals, our opponents in the dreaded Par Contest — something I knew I was going to be terrible at. In this event you could not hear the soft shuffle of the cards, nor feel the tremors around the table. Instead, a problem comes up on the screen, and you sit there, careful not to lean on your keyboard by accident, and choose which card to play. If the computer doesn't like your choice, it subtracts 250 points from your bank of 1000 points and annoyingly and mercilessly flashes: *Wrong play — try again!* Suddenly this combination appears in dummy:

DUMMY
A 5 4 3

DECLARER
9 8 2

I won't bore you with the full hand, but will merely tell you that the object as you play this combination is to keep lefty off the lead twice. Almost every human in the room started with the lead of the eight toward dummy. All their lives they've been sneaking the eight through West, and they tried it here, hoping the computer wouldn't notice. No way, baby.

Wrong play — try again!

One thing was for sure — if the eight was no good, the nine was not going to work either. One guy a few feet from me first punched in the eight, got the flash, swore, punched in the two, got the flash, swore and with a crazed expression, punched the nine! Flash! He flung his coffee at the computer screen and stormed out of the room. (Michael, my heart was with you.) The winning play was to go to dummy and lead low toward the eight.

There was one interesting deal in which you bid to five clubs after the opponents bid to a vulnerable four spades. The East hand made a final pass in super-quick time, and later in the play of the hand you had to play East for two aces — I could hardly believe it. Nobody, not even a robot, could pass so fast without even considering a double (or at least breathing heavily).

During the contest, screaming and shouting in eight different languages could be heard all over the room. Only Pierre Ghestem, the legendary French double dummy expert, remained calm after the first session. He finished each problem in about five minutes. Cleverly, I had bet on him along with Forrester and Martel against my arch-rival, Benito Garozzo. Not so clever, since Benito won! Little did I realize that the mad Italian has spent the better part of his life studying double dummy techniques!

Anyway, full marks to the creator, Pietro Bernasconi, for a brilliant test and the humbling of a lot of egos.

Soon after the Par Contest, two matches into the team event, I come up against my ex-teammates Bergen and Cohen. I was South in this scenario:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♠[1]	pass
4♥	dbl	pass	?

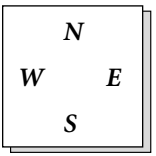
1. A preempt in clubs.

What would you bid holding:

♠ K J ♥ A 9 3 ♦ K Q 10 8 6 ♣ 7 6 4

I put the 6♦ card on the table. What the heck, at least I was declarer! The ♣2 was led...

DUMMY
♠ A 6 4 2
♥ 8
♦ A J 7 5 3
♣ A J 10

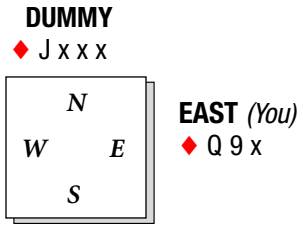


DECLARER
♠ K J
♥ A 9 3
♦ K Q 10 8 6
♣ 7 6 4

Suddenly I felt I was back in the computer room. During the Par Contest, the deuce lead inevitably was a singleton. Obviously it was a singleton here, so I put up dummy's ace. After a little thought, I realized the hand was not that difficult to play (on the bidding), especially after two days of technical practice on the Par Contest.

After I won the ♣A, I drew trumps (they broke 2-1), cashed two top spades and ruffed one. I played the ♥A and ruffed a heart, and ruffed the last spade. Finally, I led the ♥9 and discarded a club from dummy. West, who began with seven hearts, had to give me a ruff-sluff for my twelfth trick. The good news: the slam made. The bad news: the difference between a par contest and real life was emphasized — I could have taken the spade finesse — East had the queen all the time. So much for 'purity-spurity.'

Although sometimes, as in the above hand, I can find a technical line, the truth is that for me the pleasure of a successful, psychological play is incomparable. Try this:



After the bidding (1NT by South, 3NT by North), partner, Paul Chemla of Paris, makes a normal-looking lead, dummy wins the trick, and the ♦J is called by the declarer, who, by the way, happens to be me. Quick — do you cover or not? Don't do the wrong thing — Chemla has a famous temper.

A little background: a few years ago I wrote a BOLS tip, entitled: 'If They Don't Cover, They Don't Have it!' In it I recommend that (as declarer) when you lead a jack from dummy, and East fails to cover, you should assume the queen is offside. For example with ♦Jxxx opposite ♦AK10x(x), you lead the ♦J and if East plays low, you play West to hold the queen.

Luckily for me, on this deal, Chemla's partner had seen my tip. He played smoothly, low from his ♦Q9x. This catered not only to the BOLS tip, but also to the genuine possibility of J-x-x-x opposite A-10-x-x-x. Unlucky — this happened to be the only way for me to make an overtrick, since I held only three diamonds (♦A10x). I knew he was good enough not to cover — funny game, bridge, sometimes they tell you one thing, other times another.

Chemla began to scream at the poor guy, and when (after the session) I ran into Paul, his great head downcast to the floor (having

not qualified), I tried to console him by inviting him to dinner. He refused — a rare event — and looked at me sadly and said in broken English: "I go to make the suicide." (Luckily he changed his mind.)

One week later, in the Netherlands, keeping in line with the Dutch traditions, the Dutch Options Exchange sponsored a fabulous tournament. My downfall came on this deal. Put yourself in my partner's shoes. He held the following hand:

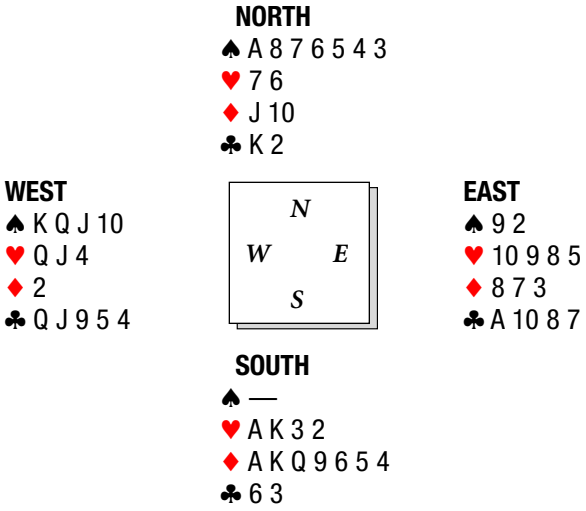
♠ K Q J 10 ♥ Q J 4 ♦ 2 ♣ Q J 9 5 4

As dealer you begin with a pass — conservative but acceptable. Then:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass[1]	pass	pass	1♦
dbl	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	3♣
pass	3♦[2]	pass	4♦[3]
pass	6♦[4]	all pass	

1. He counts honor tricks.
2. Not forcing.
3. Not forcing.
4. Skip bid!

If you weren't in the Netherlands, you might think you were in *Nightmare on Elm Street*. Anyway, what would you lead? You might think that spade sequence looks tempting? No way! This auction calls for a trump — it screams for a trump! And you had better lead one, quick. The full deal:



Of course, a club lead would have worked, but a trump lead is proper, since declarer is almost guaranteed to hold spade shortness and dummy's leap to slam indicates ruffing chances. If only I had been on lead, the haunting memory of the Par Contest's singleton deuces might have made me fling that cursed ♦2 on the table, faster than the computer could flash: *Wrong play — try again!*

Back in London I played in a teams tournament called the Lederer. My partners were, alternately, Kyle Larsen (who kept a cassette player with him while he played) and 'Moonie' Ataullah (the Pakistani international). We won, but it might have been because Kyle's music was on so loud that the opponents lost concentration!

This invitational team event is scored by a combination of IMPs, board-a-match, and victory points. It was a favorite method of the late Jeremy Flint, and I enjoy it, even thought it is more difficult to figure out the score than in a German-Canadian team match. The point is that every trick counts for something, but is not the be-all and end-all, as in matchpoints.

Here's the hand from a key match. In first position, I picked up:

♠ A K 7 6 ♥ K J ♦ Q 2 ♣ Q J 7 5 4

The bidding went:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			Me
			1♣
2♠	3♥	pass	3NT
pass	pass	dbl	?

What would you do? If you think about it, you should redouble. Partner probably has a singleton spade, and may have stretched his values already. He might easily (and reasonably) run from 3NT doubled if you pass. Anyway, you think you're going to make it, don't you?

In this case, my partner, Moonie held:

♠ 3 ♥ A 7 6 5 4 ♦ K 10 5 ♣ K 9 8 2

Had I not redoubled, he certainly has good reason to remove to four clubs. Yes, in this case, five clubs is also a good contract, but three notrump is ironclad and three notrump redoubled is better still — especially when you make an overtrick.

Now, I ask you: when did a computer last earn a thousand number, huh?

PROS AND CONS

I am a passionately keen amateur golfer, but one thing I would never do is enter a pro-am golf tournament. Oh, I would dearly love to play a round with Greg Norman or Ernie Els — but you see, I have played in a number of pro-am bridge tournaments, and I could not bear to put any of my golfing heroes through the agonies that the professional in these events has to endure.

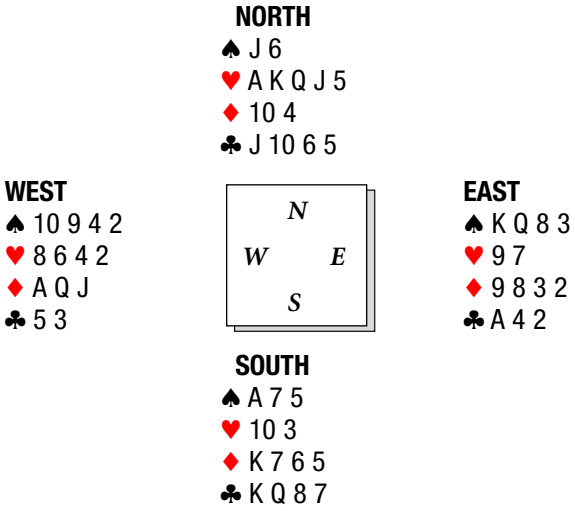
Take the West cards on the deal below. You are the professional half of a pro-am partnership in a tournament that is the prelude to a challenge match between your team and the Dutch international side. The setting is perfect — you are playing on the balcony of a medieval castle, having just dined royally. Your partner is… but you will see that for yourself soon enough. Your hand is not inspiring:

♠ 10 9 4 2 ♥ 8 6 4 2 ♦ A Q J ♣ 5 3

and this is the bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
You			
			1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	all pass	

South's opening bid of one club might have been on a three-card suit, and his rebid of 1NT showed 12-14 points. I led the ♠10, and this was the full deal:



The ten of spades was covered by North's jack and my partner's queen, declarer playing the five. Partner mysteriously returned the ♠8, on which South played the seven. I knew that I wanted my partner to be able to win the fourth round of spades and play a diamond through the South hand, so I overtook the eight of spades with the nine and continued with the ♠4 to partner's king and South's ace. Declarer now led the ♣K from his hand. This held the trick, and South followed with ♣Q.

My partner studied this card for a while, during which I held my breath. Surely he could not be going to duck, which would bring

declarer's total to three tricks with five solid hearts on the table! Eventually, partner won the queen of clubs with the ace, and I relaxed. A diamond through, the ♠2 to the three, then another diamond through and we would have the contract beaten by two tricks. Bridge was an easy game.

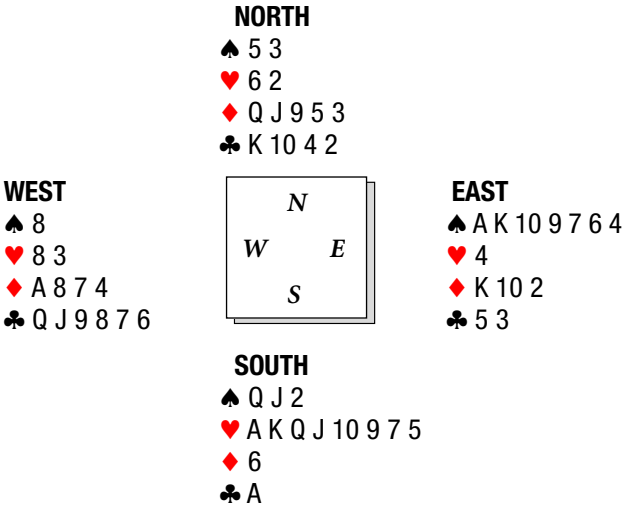
Partner emerged from a trance with the three of spades. Not to worry, I thought — he will play a diamond next, and South will have to go up with the king in an attempt to make the contract, so we'll still collect a 200 penalty. When I followed with the two of spades under the ace, partner's brow furrowed in thought. At last, he appeared to work it out and played — a club! Declarer claimed nine tricks, I stared blankly across the table, and partner explained that he thought my ♠2 was a suit preference signal!

Don't worry, Tiger. Don't worry, Nick. I'll never do that to you, I promise.

BONJOUR M. L'HIBOU

All bridge players are animals — or at least animal-like, as you would surely agree if you have read any of the 'Menagerie' series by the late Victor Mollo. One of my favorite characters is the Senior Kibitzer at the Griffins Club, Oscar the Owl. He is, as his name implies, a wise old bird who prefers not to expose himself to the perils of actual play. Instead, he sits in his armchair and utters such priceless gems as: "Curious hand — both sides can make four hearts."

It must have been a French cousin of Oscar the Owl who watched this hand from the French national team trials. West was the dealer with both sides vulnerable:



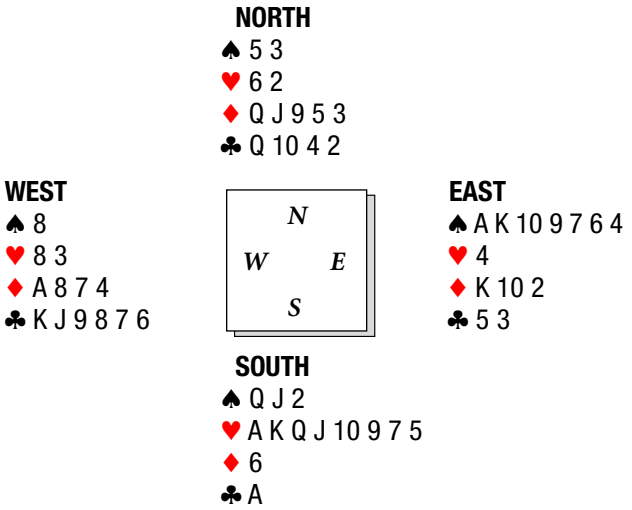
There were two passes to East, who opened with a preemptive 3♠. He was a little strong for this, but facing a partner who could not open, it was unlikely that his side had a game — and who knew what problems the high-level opening might pose for the other side? But South rose brilliantly to the occasion — disdaining the obvious bid of 4♥, a contract that would have been defeated, he made the excellent call of 3NT! All passed, and West dutifully led a spade.

East won the opening lead and played two more rounds of spades. South won the third, spread his mighty heart suit and the ♣A across the table with true Gallic panache, and announced that he would concede the last trick in diamonds. The defenders shrugged their shoulders and entered 630 to North-South on their scorecards — the defense could, it was true, have saved the overtrick, but such considerations matter little in a team game, and the hand seemed destined for obscurity. The kibitzer though, was looking pensive.

Eventually, he stirred in his chair and remarked: "Good bid — but it was lucky that your partner held the king of clubs." The players stared at him in amazement. If he had said: "Lucky that your partner had the diamonds guarded", there would have been general agreement — but if ever there was a card that appeared to have had no conceivable role in the play of a hand, it was the ♣K. It did not take a trick, for declarer could not reach dummy to cash it. It did not act as a stopper, for declarer had the ace. What on earth was lucky about the presence of the ♣K in the North hand?

The players asked the kibitzer to explain his apparently absurd remark, but in fine Oscar the Owl style that gentleman, having caused a stir with a single cryptic utterance, would say no more. But he had spoken the simple truth — without the ♣K in dummy, declarer's contract could have been defeated. Can you see how?

Assume that the ♣K is with one of the defenders:



Assume also that instead of leading a spade, the defense starts with the ♦A and a diamond to the ♦K. What is South to discard? Amazingly, declarer is squeezed at the second trick! He cannot throw a spade, or the defenders will cash a million tricks. He cannot throw the ♣A, for that sets up five winners for East-West — two spades, two diamonds and the ♣K. And when South throws a heart winner, the defense can play a club. Now South will have only eight tricks. With the ♣K in dummy, though, South has a counter — he can discard the ♣A on the second diamond, and the defense is powerless. Of course, in real life it would never have occurred to the defenders to start with two top diamonds in order to squeeze declarer at Trick 2. But such mundane considerations are of no concern to the true kibitzer, for his analysis is always double dummy and his counsels are always of perfection. Whichever team eventually triumphed in the French trials, of one thing the selectors could be sure — they had already found a champion kibizter. *Bien joué, Oscar l' Hibou!*

WEAK TWOS & HAMBONE

I don't mind telling you that writing my first magazine article was the hardest thing that I have ever done, and that includes the time that I gave up smoking — though admittedly I had some help from a hypnotist.

I thought that I would start quietly with an opening bid problem, then wind up with a few redoubled slams with a couple of trump coups thrown in. What do you open, if you are a normal human being, first seat, favorable vulnerability in a team game?

♠ Q87 ♥ KQJ863 ♦ A97 ♣ 3

The hand comes from this the New York Cavendish Club Swiss, which follows the Charity Invitational Pairs event held every May. The editor of a certain bridge publication was playing with me on this occasion and opened 2♥, a Weak Two-bid. In England, we would open 1♥ and jump rebid to three! Really, I think Matt's gone mad with his Weak Two-bids. There's something to be said for

decent Weak Twos even with side four-card suits, five-card suits and six-card suits — that is, if you have the methods to show the hand. We do in Pakistan, and I'll share a secret or two about this with you later. My complaint is that when a Weak Two-bid is too strong, your partner will not be able to judge the hand. O.K., say you do open 2♥ and I, your partner, bid 3♠, natural and invitational to game. Remember we are favorable. The hand on your right, one of the world's best players, says double. What is your call now? You may redouble, you may raise to 4♠, you may pass. Would you think of 4♦? My partner did. It went double on his left, and I retreated to 4♥. Here's the review. What is your next call?

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Me		*You*
			2♥
pass	3♠	dbl	4♦
dbl	4♥	pass	?

Now you bid 4♠, right? Wait. Remember the vulnerability? You do have a nice heart suit. Is it possible that your wily Pakistani partner was psyching with three spades? Does it really make a difference if you play in four hearts or four spades? Your heart suit is certainly adequate opposite a doubleton. So do you agree, a pass is the wiser action?

You are a shmigeggie! You end up in four hearts and I lay down this dummy:

♠ K J 10 9 4 2 ♥ 2 ♦ 3 ♣ J 10 9 8 4

I was merely giving preference from diamonds to hearts. Although it was conceivable that my partner was cuebidding in support of spades when he bid 4♦, I knew that he would confirm it by raising me on the next round. But what if he had 6-5 in hearts and diamonds? Then I must give preference. The main point is that my partners should not worry about what I am up to. That's *my* problem. If I psyche three spades, I am certainly prepared to go to five hearts.

Enough of this hand for now, let's get to redoubled slams, and have a little fun. Here's a swing of a few thousand points on an opening lead. Let's see how you do with it:

♠ 9 7 6 ♥ J 10 9 5 3 ♦ 9 7 5 ♣ Q 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2NT	pass	4♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	dbl	pass
pass	redbl	all pass	

The first thing I do is get a review of the auction. This is the sort of hand where I am looking around the room for a pretty girl rather than listening to the bidding.

I held these cards in the Valkenburg, Netherlands, World Team Olympiad in 1980. I actually didn't have much to do on the hand, since when I played it, my partner was on lead, and the contract was 6NT. When my teammates played the hand, Bob Hamman held the West cards (I'm told his friends call him 'Hambone').

Have you made your choice yet? O.K., here's some help. The double of a slam usually calls for first suit bid in dummy. In this case, there was no such suit, so perhaps the double calls for first suit bid by declarer. Declarer's first suit, however, was spades. Not even my second cousin from Karachi who doesn't play bridge would lead a trump.

Could the double be asking for a diamond lead, since declarer bid five diamonds in response to Blackwood? Or perhaps the double says simply 'find my void partner' and one should lead one's longest suit. In that case we lead a heart. But if the double means 'find my void', the opponents may run to 6NT, and the double backfires. If so, the best meaning of the double could be 'find my ace-king'. Ace-king of clubs or diamonds?

Well, before you turn the page, what are your deepest thoughts on this matter? Personally, my thoughts are not so deep. I lead a heart, but I know the hand:

NORTH *(Johnny-Alam)*
♠ A Q
♥ Q 5 4 2
♦ A K Q J
♣ K 10 9

WEST *(Hamman)*
♠ 9 7 6
♥ J 10 9 6 3
♦ 9 7 5
♣ Q 8

EAST *(Wolff)*
♠ 5 3
♥ —
♦ 10 8 6 4 2
♣ A 7 5 4 3 2

SOUTH *(Nishat)*
♠ K J 10 8 4 2
♥ A K 8 7
♦ 3
♣ J 6

If Hambone had found the heart lead, Wolffie would have been quite pleased. Plus 400 points is always better than minus a couple of thousand. Unfortunately, Hambone, who is a great player in all respects, except perhaps on opening lead, reasoned that his partner was doubling to get him to lead a diamond.

Notice that Johnny-Alam's redouble turned out successfully. If he had run to 6NT, he would merely have pushed the board. Did he suspect that the lead would be a diamond — right into his ace-king-queen-jack? On the same subject, suppose you hold this hand from an *Iceland Air* Team Championship in Reykjavik:

♠ K Q 3 ♥ J ♦ A K Q 7 5 ♣ A J 3 2

Your partner opens 1♠. You respond with 2♦. He rebids 2♥ and you jump to 3♠. Partner bids four, and you check for aces via Blackwood. Only one ace, so you settle in 6♠. Suddenly, your left-hand opponent, a very fine bridge player, doubles! The auction comes back to you. Do you pass, redouble, or run to 6NT?

It seems obvious that a diamond lead against 6♠ is going to be ruffed. However, the doubler had an ace-king up his sleeve:

NORTH
♠ K Q 3
♥ J
♦ A K Q 7 5
♣ A J 3 2

WEST
♠ 7 6 4
♥ 5 4 3 2
♦ 9 8 6
♣ 10 6 5

EAST
♠ 8 2
♥ A K 9 7
♦ 10 4 3 2
♣ 9 8 7

SOUTH
♠ A J 10 9 5
♥ Q 10 8 6
♦ J
♣ K Q 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♦
pass	6♠	dbl	pass
pass	?		

The escape to 6NT falls right into East's trap. So what actually happened? Did East's psychic Lightner double become a candidate for bid of the year? Not quite. The player sitting North must have had ice in his veins because he passed the hand out. West tracked a diamond, declarer took all the tricks, and East received the firm bawling out he deserves for trying to play Paki-style bridge without a license.

So much for Bridge Yesterday and Today; on to Bridge Tomorrow. Your partner opens a Weak Two-bid in a major and you bid 2NT as an inquiry. He rebids as follows:

3♣ — bad-bad or good-good.

(For those players who've never played Ogust rebids, bad-bad means bad hand-bad suit; good-good means good hand-good suit.) Now 3♦ asks, and opener returns to his suit with bad-bad. With

good-good, opener bids 3NT if balanced, or three of the other major with a singleton somewhere (responder can now bid 3NT to ask where).

3♦ — good hand-bad suit or 6-4 with either four-card minor.

Now responder bids 3♥ to ask, and opener bids his four-card minor, or bids 3♠ or 3NT (balanced) with a good hand-bad suit. (Same as above — responder may bid 3NT over 3♠ to ask for the singleton.)

3 of your major — good suit, bad hand.

3 of other major — natural, 6-4 in the majors.

Now responder may bid 4♣ to agree the lower ranking major, 4♦ to agree the higher!

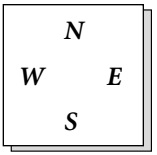
3NT — solid major.

4 new suit-natural, 6-5 shape.

(If you open 2♥ with five spades and six hearts, jump to 4♥ now to show shape). Over this, you have three ways to Key Card Blackwood, but I'm not going to tell you what they are. I've given away enough Paki secrets for one day.

Last item on the menu: this beautiful defense by Bob 'Hambone' Hamman:

NORTH
♠ K J 10 9 4 2
♥ 2
♦ 3
♣ J 10 9 8 4

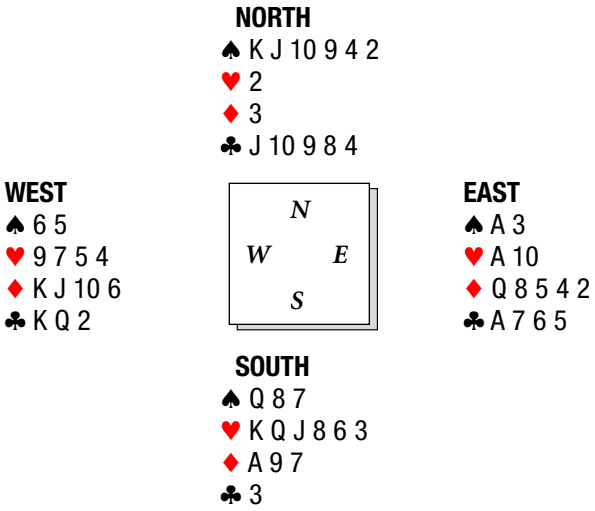


EAST *(Hambone)*
♠ A 3
♥ A 10
♦ Q 8 5 4 2
♣ A 7 6 5

South opened 2♥, North bid 3♠, and Hambone doubled. South next called 4♦, partner doubled, and North retreated to 4♥ to end the auction. The opening lead was the club king. This held, and West switched to a trump. How would you defend?

If you won the ♥A and shifted to diamonds, you would be successful on the actual layout, but give declarer a free diamond finesse

on many other layouts. If you won the ♥A and tried to cash the ♣A, declarer would ruff it and make the contract!



Yes, this is the hand from the Cavendish where my partner played me to have psyched. He would have made his contract had Hambone not made a unique and subtle defensive play. When Wolffie switched to a trump at Trick 2, Hammie put in the ten!

Declarer won it and drove out the ♠A. Hambone tried to cash the ♣A, but declarer ruffed. Had my partner led a low heart out of his hand, he could now have made his contract. However, he tried the more pedestrian honor, and this lost to Hambone's singleton ace. Next came the diamond switch.

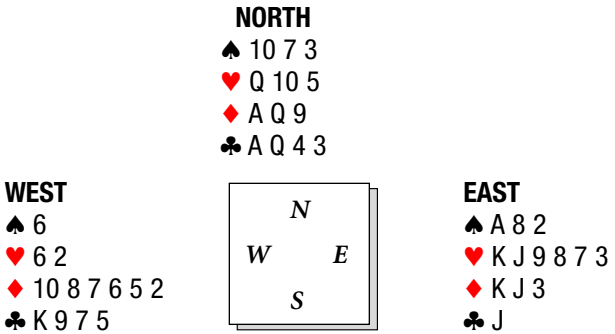
Because of the earlier play of the ♥10, the defense not only made two trump tricks, but also collected their diamond tricks for down three. Bravo, finissimo, and all that jazz.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

My views on complex bidding methods are well known. I am not a fan. I don't think they're necessary, and I don't think they're likely to attract new players or, more importantly, new sponsors to the game of bridge. Thus, a refreshing aspect of the 1994 World Bridge Olympiad in Salsomaggiore was that bidding methods based on the forcing pass and weak or highly artificial openings were not permitted in the round robin stage. This meant that the bidding in general was more natural and comprehensible than in previous World Championship competition. Teams with simple methods but good bidding judgment were able to compete on equal terms —

which, for spectators and sponsors alike, is as it should be.

Three such teams made a major impact on the Olympiad. Egypt and Israel both qualified for the quarter-final stages, and Turkey held a top four position in their qualifying group for a very long time before falling at the final hurdle. The deals below feature these teams in action — first Egypt:

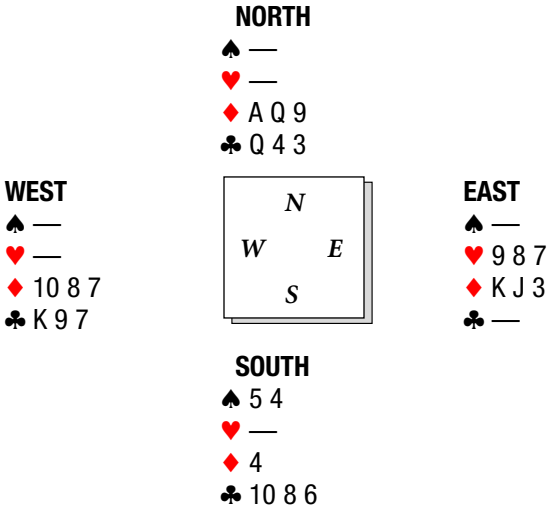


WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	1♥	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

Ashraf Sadek became declarer as South in a contract of 4♠ that at first, and even second sight, looked hopeless. Surely there was no escape from the loss of a heart, a spade and two clubs? Simple, natural bidders the Egyptians may be, but they are formidable card players, and Sadek made very short work of this 'impossible' contract.

East had bid hearts, so West led one to the ten, jack and ace. Sadek played a trump, and East won immediately to continue with the ♥K and another heart. Of course, South could discard a club on this trick, but Sadek could hardly know that West had no more trumps. Instead, he ruffed high and made the great play of a club to the ♣A before drawing the remaining trumps. He carried on play-

ing spades, to leave this position:



When the ♠5 was cashed, West had no safe discard. A club would let Sadek establish the whole suit with the loss of one more trick. West actually chose a diamond, but Sadek then played a diamond to the ace and ruffed a diamond to leave West, North and South with nothing but clubs. The lead of the ♣10 forced West to win with the king and lead from his ♣97 into dummy's ♣Q4 and declarer's ♣86.

Israel narrowly lost their quarter-final match against the Netherlands, but they did not go down without a fight. The oldest player on the Dutch side was thirty-three, but he was giving several years to the Herbst brothers Ilan and Ofir, who were twenty-one and twenty-four. This was the hand:

NORTH
♠ K J 7 4
♥ 10
♦ A Q J
♣ A K 7 6 2

WEST
♠ A 8
♥ 3 2
♦ 9 8 7 5 2
♣ J 9 8 5

EAST
♠ Q 10 9 6 5 3 2
♥ 9 8 6
♦ K 10
♣ 3

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ A K Q J 7 5 4
♦ 6 4 3
♣ Q 10 4

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Leufkens	*Ilan*	*Westra*	*Ofir*
	1♣	3♠	4♥
4♠	dbl	pass	5♥
pass	6♥	all pass	

At the other table, the auction was the same as far as South's bid of 4♥, which was passed out. Enri Leufkens and Berry Westra are one of the best pairs in the world, but they were taught a lesson in the bidding by their young opponents. When your side has preempted and put the opponents under pressure, there is very often no need to raise the preempt, for it may already have done its work. Here, Leufkens's bid of 4♠ served only to inform North that South had a spade void, so when Ofir Herbst showed an independent heart suit by removing the double of 4♠, it was easy for his brother to continue to the slam and gain 11 IMPs for Israel.

Melih Ozdil, the magician among the Turkish players, was declarer in 4♠ on this deal:

NORTH
♠ 9 8 4 3
♥ —
♦ K 10 9 6 5
♣ A Q 9 4

WEST
♠ A Q 10
♥ J 10 7
♦ J 8 3
♣ K 8 7 6

EAST
♠ J
♥ A 9 8 5 4 3 2
♦ Q 7
♣ J 5 2

SOUTH
♠ K 7 6 5 2
♥ K Q 6
♦ A 4 2
♣ 10 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♣	1♦	3♥	3♠
4♥	4♠	all pass	

West led the ♥J, ruffed in dummy. A spade was led, declarer ducking East's ♠J, but West cleverly overtook with the ♠Q to play another heart. Ozdil ruffed again in dummy and set about an elimination play. He played a diamond to the ace, took a club finesse, cashed the ♣A and ruffed a club. He ruffed his last heart in dummy, ruffed another club, played a diamond to the king and exited with a diamond. West had to lead away from his ♠A10 to the twelfth trick, so...

Alas for Turkey, the dream was not to come true. Ozdil did in fact play the hand exactly as described above, but West had begun with only two diamonds and five clubs, so East won the third diamond and led a plain suit through South's ♠K7 to West's ♠A10 for one down. But Turkey and the others would be back in four years' time, bidding simply and playing brilliantly — the game of bridge at its best.

PLAY IT AGAIN, OMAR

The life of a sports professional has its lonely moments. However, in return, I have made friends all over the world, and have visited lands that I might never have set foot in had I stuck to my early career of accounting.

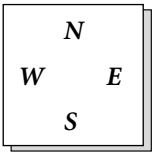
Some years ago, I took part in a unique tour of five cities: Morocco, Tunisia, Luxembourg, Paris and Trouville. The tour was organized by a friend of mine from England, Paul Hackett, and is open to any bridge enthusiast who wishes to spend a week to five weeks in the elegant world of European bridge. Some of the finest international bridge stars were enlisted to spice up the action, including Americans such as Alan Sontag, Eddie Kantar and Billy Eisenberg. Then there was Omar.

When Ingrid Bergman walked into Rick's Cafe and asked Sam to play it again, she was not referring to a bridge hand. A great bridge analyst (and of course leading man), Omar Sharif, did make that suggestion on this hand from our North African tour:

N-S Vul.

NORTH
♠ 5 4 3 2
♥ 7 6 3
♦ 4 2
♣ K J 3 2

WEST *(Omar)*
♠ Q 10
♥ A Q J 8 2
♦ Q 7
♣ 10 8 5 4



EAST *(Zia)*
♠ A K 8
♥ —
♦ K 9 6 5 3
♣ A Q 9 7 6

SOUTH
♠ J 9 7 6
♥ K 10 9 5 4
♦ A J 10 8
♣ —

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	1♥
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

I'm not sure I would always reopen with a double on the East cards. However, when you're surrounded by fifty hungry kibitzers looking for blood and glory, you don't rebid minor suits; you double.

Omar led the ♦Q. Declarer won and played back the ♦10 to my king. Now I had to underlead my ace-king of spades to have any chance of down three. At that moment in time, however, I had more women kibitzers than Omar, and I was not about to lose my edge, so I played safe, and declarer, through a series of endplays, throw-ins and so-forths, managed to take five tricks. My partner held the ♠Q, and the lesson of all this is: when in doubt play Omar for the girl.

Before the last card was played, Omar chastised himself for not making the lead to guarantee a three-trick set. Can you see what he was talking about? More on this later, but I'll slip in a clue: the answer is a famous stockbroker's nickname.

Still in North Africa, but on the Mediterranean where bikinis and other short suits are in fashion. During the Mixed Pairs I picked up this bare hand with no one vulnerable:

♠ 7 5 4 3 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ 9 7 6 ♣ 7 6 3

The bidding started with my partner who opened a Weak Two-bid in spades. The next hand doubled, and I had to judge my values. What would you call?

In bridge, as in life, there are always options. You could raise spades, psyche any one of three suits, or just keep silent. However, when in Tunisia, do as the Tunisians do, and since one Tunisian on my right doubled, I redoubled. Luckily nobody re-redoubled, and when my left-hand opponent called 3♦ with his sixteen high-card points, the rest of us passed without further consideration. After this hand, it became harder than usual to get out of Africa. However, I apologized to all and made my exit.

There is a fortress in Luxembourg called 'The Bouc' overlooking the Alzette river which protected the Romans during their conquest of Europe. A modern Roman, Benito Garozzo, needed a revoke to overcome a much rockier defensive position against Eddie Kantar:

N-S Vul.

NORTH
♠ 8 7 5 3
♥ A 10 9 2
♦ 4
♣ A Q 7 4

WEST *(Benito)*
♠ 2
♥ J 5 4
♦ 3 2
♣ K J 10 9 6 5 2

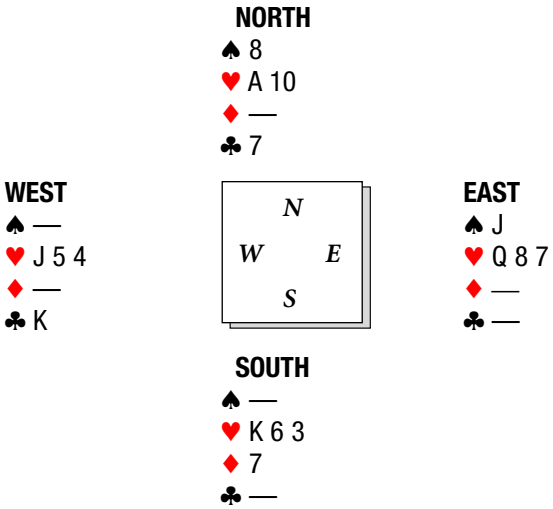
EAST *(du Pont)*
♠ J 10 9 6 4
♥ Q 8 7
♦ 10 9 8 6 5
♣ —

SOUTH *(Kantar)*
♠ A K Q
♥ K 6 3
♦ A K Q J 7
♣ 8 3

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♣	pass	pass	dbl
pass	4♣	pass	6♦
all pass			

The lead was the ♠2. Declarer drew two rounds of trumps, discarding a club from dummy, and Benito pitched a club instead of following with his second diamond. Traveling twelve thousand miles to run into 6-1 splits is not Eddie Kantar's idea of a good time. And when Benito suddenly, a bit flushed, found his diamond, Eddie became a bit flustered. A world champion ten times over like Benito should be able to follow suit, so one cannot blame poor Eddie for now miscounting trumps. Unfortunately, an exquisite double squeeze was left unfulfilled on the table.

On the third round of diamonds, declarer throws a heart from dummy. He must not lead another trump or dummy will be squeezed. However, if he now plays a club to the queen, and continues with the ace, East has no defense. Her best chance is to ruff the ace of clubs and exit with a trump; but declarer wins, discarding a heart, and plays off his spades to reach this ending:



The seven of diamonds forces a heart from West, declarer throws dummy's club, and East must hold on to his spade. Suddenly all the hearts are good.

Finally, the Seine, Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre and to the northwest, that terrible spot where royal heads once tumbled off the guillotine. No doubt many a bridge player has wished a similar fate for his partner. In fact, Alan Sontag suggested a beheading for his man on this deal as South:

♠ — ♥ K J 9 8 4 3 ♦ A Q 5 ♣ K Q J 10

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
2♠	3♠	pass	5♠
pass	6♦	dbl	7♥
all pass			

Three spades was a game force in hearts, and five spades was the electrifying new convention: Exclusion Blackwood, or: 'Show me how many aces you have partner, but don't count the ace of this suit.' South now knew Sonty held the ace of hearts and ace of clubs. His leap to seven hearts was a small gamble, but I don't think worth a visit to the Bastille.

NORTH *(Sonty)*
♠ A 10 5 4
♥ A 7 6
♦ 3 2
♣ A 7 5 4

WEST
♠ K J 9 8 6 2
♥ Q 5 2
♦ 8 7
♣ 8 3

EAST
♠ Q 7 3
♥ 10
♦ K J 10 9 6 4
♣ 9 6 2

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ K J 9 8 4 3
♦ A Q 5
♣ K Q J 10

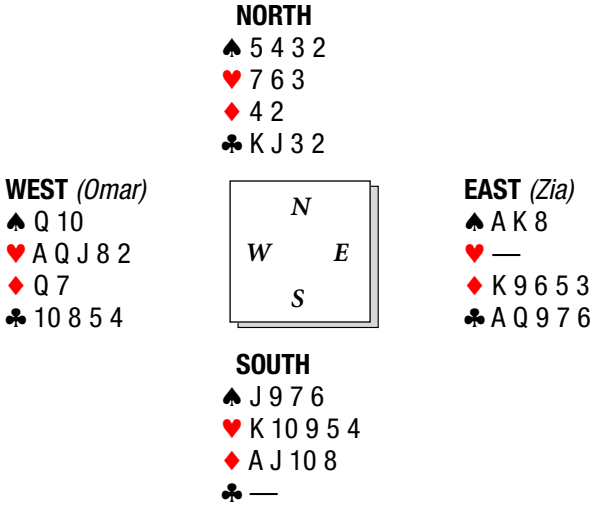
Opening lead: ♦8

Declarer went down one after leading a trump to the ace, but would have made a grand slam in clubs on the same diamond lead. Three rounds of diamonds and three rounds of clubs would have revealed 6-3-2-2 shape on his left. His only hope would be to lay down the ♥K and catch East with the singleton queen or ten. Would you have thought of bidding 7♣? Would anybody?

Trouville is a seaside resort on the English Channel where the mussels are the best in France, I promise you, and the casino, once

run by the great bridge player, Jean Michel Boulenger, was also the site of Omar Sharif's greatest losing streak.

One night after bridge, Omar told us of the time he had completed filming *Funny Girl* with Barbara Streisand, flown to Trouville and lost his entire one million earnings at the baccarat table! He went straight to the bar, as any human being who had just lost one million dollars in one evening would. A fellow player followed him over, gave his condolences and suggested if he had any money left he should invest in silver. Omar seized the tip, borrowed on credit and phoned 'Ace' Greenberg at Bear Stearns in New York. Silver skyrocketed and soon thereafter, Omar had t*hree* million dollars. Speaking of Omar, what was your choice of leads against 1♥ doubled from the Moroccan tournament?



The answer is the ♥A. Drawing trumps is often best against low-level doubled contracts and if you lead the ♥A, as Omar suggested, you can continue with the queen. No matter what declarer does, you regain the lead to draw a third trump off dummy and then switch to the club suit. South takes only four tricks, and your Pakistani partner looks at you with new admiration: "Omar, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship."

THE DRY SPELL ENDS

After playing one of the 1990 *Staten Bank* tournaments (now the *Cap Gemini)* in the Hague — there is no doubt it is currently one of the best events around — I decided to give up this stupid game.

Bridge is annoying when you are playing badly and out of luck (and I really hate coming in last). The only solution was to take up another game; I'd tried golf — perhaps baseball, if I ever learned the rules.

On this occasion, my partner was Jeff Meckstroth and our hopes were high. However, neither of us played well: we started in last place and went downhill steadily. Whenever we could have a system mix-up, we did. Early on I had the A-K-J-x-x of spades and heard Jeff open 1NT and the next guy overcall two spades. Drooling as I pulled out the big red 'D' from the bidding box, the next thing I saw was partner placing the 4♥ card on the table. The habits of a lifetime and a lust for blood had made me forget that we had agreed to negative doubles in this position.

Near the end of the event, against the eventual winners, Tony Forrester and Andrew Robson, I opened 2NT and Jeff bid 3NT. That's simple enough, except that we were playing a raise as a transfer to four clubs (a great convention if anybody ever remembers it). I was sure that he had forgotten, but I had no option but to bid according to our system. We ended in 4NT, down one. Our opponents thanked us profusely for our ethics as they dashed off to recheck the prize for first place.

The following week was the rebirth of the *Sunday Times* Pairs in London, now the *Macallan* — the origin of the tuxedo tournament. It was a thrilling event from a publicity standpoint. There were hundreds of spectators and great BBC coverage, which destroyed the myth that bridge cannot be presented on TV. There were interviews with the players and real post-mortems were secretly filmed. Also, there were tricks of the camera, such as slow-motion shots and fast-motion shots. The only time they had to adjust the camera was when they were filming my partner, Alan Sontag, who was on fast motion long before TV had ever heard of it. Sonty and I finished an undistinguished seventh and I was more resolved than ever that my days in the spotlight were over. Oh well.

Next on the agenda was an innovative concept, the Scientist/Traditionalist match. The organizer was Dimitri Marchessini, a gentleman player from the famous Portland Club. A lover of the game, Dimitri believes that complicated systems and too much artificiality are harming public interest in bridge as well as being vastly overrated by the players. Here, he put his money, a purse of 20,000 pounds to the winners, where his mouth is.

The event was held at the Meridien Hotel in Piccadilly. Playing for the Scientists were Benito Garozzo, Billy Eisenberg, Paul Soloway and Bobby Goldman. For the Naturals were Tony Forrester, Bobby

Wolff, Gabriel Chagas and me. We played three matches, and in each match we changed partners. The Scientists were permitted to use any conventions that they liked, while we Naturals were only permitted Blackwood (you could slip in an occasional cuebid when no one was looking). The end result was that the Scientists won two out of three matches while we Naturals won on overall IMP total. They won the money but we salvaged our pride.

Nearly all of us felt before the match that we had little chance, but the match proved beyond a doubt that when it comes down to the bottom line, good or bad bridge outweighs systemic understandings. One of the hidden benefits of playing 'natural' is that when you don't play a convention, you can't forget it. Here is an example featuring two great players, Billy Eisenberg and Benito Garozzo. My hand (East) was:

♠ J 2 ♥ J 4 3 ♦ Q 6 ♣ K Q 9 8 6 4

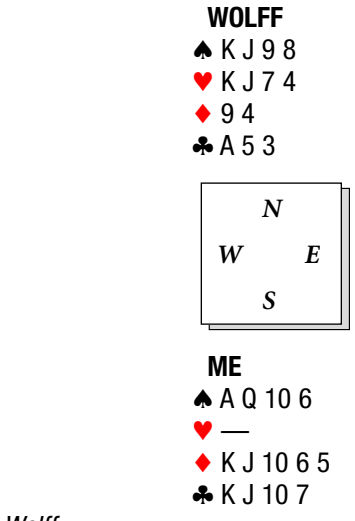
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Forrester	*Garozzo*	*Zia*	*Eisenberg*
1NT	2♦[1]	3NT[2]	dbl[3]
pass	4♦[4]	pass	4♥[5]
dbl	all pass		

1. Systemically both majors; however, Garozzo had forgotten and held seven diamonds to the ace and out.
2. No Lebensohl, no nothing — simply bridge.
3. Lead one of your suits, baby. I've got 'em both covered.
4. Sorry partner, shouldn't really have bid (still not realizing partner is playing him for majors).
5. How sweet of you, Benito, to allow me to pick a major.

When two of the world's finest players land in their 3-3 fit at the four-level, minus 1100, there must be a lesson for us mortals. I think that it is this: when you don't have understandings, you don't have misunderstandings.

For those of you who are not yet converted to 'natural', here are some more advantages. First, your card play will improve because your brain will not be cluttered up with things to remember. Second, your bidding will improve. No longer will you bid in a

straightjacket, but you will be constantly evaluating and using judgement. Third, good guys always have good luck on their side. For example, here is a deal that Bobby Wolff bid with me:



Wolff		*Me*
1♠	(3♥)	6♠

Wolff chose to open rather than a three-card minor because we were playing freestyle. The fact that he chose spades over hearts may be because he valued his 9-8 over his 7-4. Or maybe it was a Texas way to hog the hand. Whatever the reasoning, his one spade opening was a major turn-on. Over three hearts I could cuebid a scientific four hearts, but no self-respecting natural bidder would cuebid when he could jump directly to a slam.

The queen of diamonds was onside and, even against a 4-1 trump division, six spades was cold.

The day before the match, when I was out on the driving range, a guy in the next cubicle told me that my swing was terrible, but that he was rooting for the Naturals anyway. It was interesting to note that during the match, the Vugraph audience was also rooting for us.

Why were the Naturals perceived as the 'good guys'? I'm not sure, but I believe it was because the public is generally against gadgets and artificial bids that they don't understand. One of these days we plan to take a team of Naturals around the world to challenge all

scientific teams. Meanwhile, this event was over, it was great fun, everyone was a good sport, and rumor had it that three of the Scientists put in a request for a transfer to the Naturals next time.

Still, we had officially lost the match and by now I was somewhat depressed. I'd not only been beaten by Benito at golf, I'd lost three tournaments, and my love life was nonexistent.

The final event on the winter tour was the Portland Club Individual — my last chance. I love an Individual. It's a legal way to hog hands, double the opponents, and generally play single handedly — especially because your partners never know about your mistakes from previous deals.

The best deal of the tournament was one in which I goofed. By coincidence, I was again partnered with Wolff.

NORTH
♠ A Q 10 5
♥ 6 5
♦ A 8 5 4
♣ A 10 7

SOUTH
♠ 3
♥ A K Q J
♦ K Q J 6
♣ K J 9 3

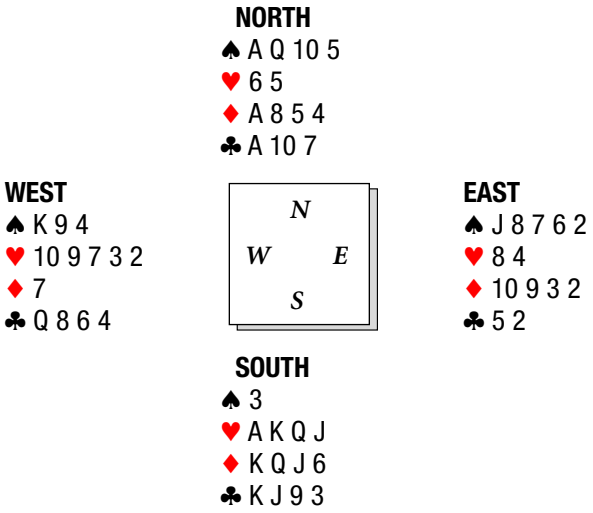
NORTH	**SOUTH**
Wolff	*Zia*
	1♦
1♠	2♥
4♦	4♥
7♦	

Nice bid by my partner. Was he proving that he could jump to slam higher that I can? (See previous deal.) The opening lead was the nine of spades. How would you play it? Clue: the opening leader was the late, great Irving Rose who, after making his lead,

picked up the newspaper and started reading the racing tips.

Solution: I'm not sure of the best technical line, but my plan was to win the ♠A, play three rounds of hearts to discard one of dummy's clubs, and ruff out the clubs without releasing the ace of trumps (in case West was short in clubs).

However, East ruffed my third heart and down went the grand slam. Here was the entire deal:



What a simple hand this was! Finesse the spade at Trick 1, ruff a spade and draw trumps. Dummy's two remaining black losers are eventually discarded on the hearts.

I was really annoyed with myself because one of my unwritten BOLS tips is: when you're in a grand slam with several equally good lines, the best is to finesse a king at Trick 1. This is more so against someone like Irving Rose. He is a reformed gambler and would only be reading the racing tips if he was feeling guilty.

Despite this hand, I won the tournament. Besides collecting 5000 pounds in prize money, my confidence returned. Yes, I said to myself, it had only been a dry spell. Once again I felt that I was the greatest. Girls began to call again from all parts of the world, but more important, my golf swing got sexier than ever before. How many strokes do you want, Benito, you pigeon?

POLAR BEER DUNK

I love the warmth, so every February I head for Reykjavik in Iceland for the annual Bridge Festival. Yes, I know the temperature is minus several and you may may run into the occasional snowstorm, but the sun shines more often than not, the air is pure and clean and the warmth is real and radiates from the people of Iceland.

The population, about a quarter of a million, is like a large family and welcome foreign visitors to their homes with genuine affection. The Icelanders love bridge, and the hectic tournament schedule leaves little time to visit some of the most incredible natural wonders in the world. But even on a short walk, you will see the geysers and volcanoes that have made the country famous. Wrapped up in my overcoat, hat and gloves, I could not at first believe my eyes when I came across people in swimsuits — but it is indeed possible to bathe outdoors in the hot springs of Iceland. More surprising perhaps, was the fact that the bathers were not drinking the beer that Icelanders seem to put back in enormous quantities.

Iceland won the World Championship in 1991 and the standard of play was very high. I attempted an old deceptive maneuver in the bidding of this hand, but was firmly put in my place by one of the country's young stars. Dealer South:

N-S Vul.

NORTH
♠ A J 3
♥ K Q
♦ A 5 4
♣ K Q 9 6 2

WEST
♠ 4 2
♥ 8 5
♦ K Q J 10 9 8 3
♣ 8 4

EAST
♠ K 10 9 8 6
♥ 7 4 3 2
♦ 2
♣ 10 5 3

SOUTH
♠ Q 7 5
♥ A J 10 9 6
♦ 7 6
♣ A J 7

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Zia			
			1♥
2♦[1]	3♣	pass	3♦[2]
pass	4♦[3]	pass	5♣
dbl[4]	6♥[5]	pass	all pass

1. 3♦, a weak jump overcall, is also possible. — you might even call it normal! But I find that such bids often enable the declarer to place the cards more accurately when the opponents buy the contract.
2. Asking North to bid 3NT with a stopper in diamonds.
3. North has a stopper, but he also has far too strong a hand to sign off in game when his partner has opened. His four diamonds suggests a slam.
4. A pure bluff — suspecting that my opponents would have a slam available, I hoped that they would stop in five clubs doubled. Even if this made an overtrick, they would score only 950 points, whereas a making slam would bring them 1400 or so. The gambit is called the 'striped-tailed ape double', because if the opponents redouble, you have to turn tail and run like a striped-tailed ape.

5. North was far too polite a player to smile in a patronizing way as he brushed aside my pitiful attempt at trickery. But, as he put the dummy down, he said something in Icelandic that brought a laugh from his partner.

South easily took twelve tricks in hearts — five trumps, five clubs and two aces. Since our teammates had done well to reach six clubs on the deal at the other table, we lost only a couple of IMPs, but my pride was hurt and curiosity piqued.

"What did you say when you put the dummy down?" I enquired.

"Oh," said North in excellent English, "I was telling my partner that perhaps we should refer to your double as the striped-tailed polar bear!" Then, smiling, he asked, "Would you like a beer?"

A RUFFING DISCARD

I have visited Biarritz, the elegant French resort, several times — usually for a bridge tournament in July. The sumptuous Hotel du Palais, a gift from Napoleon to his Josephine, and the manicured golf courses of the region are in themselves enough to entice a visitor back. Add to that the fine restaurants and bridge among friends in a vast room overlooking the ocean, and you can picture for yourself why I return year after year.

One July there was an added attraction. I was due to play with Paul Chemla, the explosive French superstar. Paul is one of the most talented bridge players in the world (an assessment with which he would agree, apart from the words 'one of'). His beaming smile and infectious chuckle prevent anyone from taking exception to his gasconade. And on this occasion, it was fully justified by his play, which was excellent throughout the tournament. See if you can find his defense as East on this deal:

NORTH *(Dummy)*
♠ A 9 7 5 3
♥ A 4 2
♦ K Q 7 5
♣ 3

EAST *(Paul)*
♠ 10
♥ 8 6
♦ 6 3 2
♣ K Q J 9 7 6 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	3♣	3♦
3♥	4♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♦
all pass			

West, your partner, leads the ♠K. South wins with dummy's ace, plays a club to his ace, ruffs a club in dummy and leads a low spade. What do you discard? Paul Chemla discarded... a trump! South and I both followed suit, and Paul switched to a heart. This was the only defense to beat 6♦, since the full hand was:

NORTH
♠ A 9 7 5 3
♥ A 4 2
♦ K Q 7 5
♣ 3

WEST
♠ K Q J 8 4
♥ K J 10 9 7 3
♦ —
♣ 10 4

EAST
♠ 10
♥ 8 6
♦ 6 3 2
♣ K Q J 9 7 6 5

SOUTH
♠ 6 2
♥ Q 5
♦ A J 10 9 8 4
♣ A 8 2

If Chemla had not ruffed the second spade, I would have been on lead, unable to attack hearts! Whatever I did, declarer would ruff his last club loser in dummy and run his trumps, keeping the ♠9 and the ♥A4 in dummy, the ♥Q5 and a diamond in hand. Down to the ♠K and the ♥KJ when the last trump was cashed, I would have been hopelessly squeezed.

"*Bien joué.*"

"*Pas du tout*", said Paul. "I merely discarded my lowest card. I was fortunate that it happened to be a trump!

THE FIRST MISTAKE

Zillions of points are won and lost at the bridge table before a hand is played. No, I'm not talking about the bidding, I'm talking about opening leads.

Think about it. Declarer is going to get to see all of his side's cards, and he can make every decision about how each of those cards is played. Each defender has to work out what his partner has, and how to get him to make the right plays. Balancing out this advantage somewhat is the opening lead — the defenders get to fire the first shot. Of course, they don't have as much information as they would like, but sometimes that extra tempo can be critical.

Whole books have been written about opening leads, and how to figure out the right play from your hand and the auction. It isn't always easy, and sometimes the whole hand can turn on exactly what card you select. Here are a couple of opening lead problems for you — one tricky, one not so difficult. First of all, suppose that you are West with these cards:

♠ 8 7 ♥ 9 8 6 5 ♦ Q 5 ♣ Q 8 5 4 2

and this was the bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	4♠	pass
pass	6♦	dbl	all pass

What would you lead? Your partner's double of the slam is the Lightner convention, asking you not to lead a spade but to try some other suit. Perhaps he is void in hearts — but in that case, why have your opponents not converted to 6♥? It may be that he has a void in clubs, or possibly he is hoping to cash the ace and king of that suit if you lead one. Make your choice.

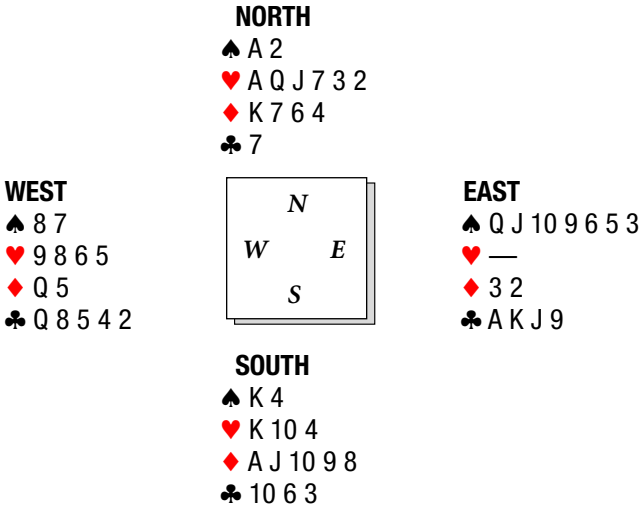
Your second problem comes as East with these cards:

♠ Q J 10 9 6 5 3 ♥ — ♦ 3 2 ♣ A K J 9

After this auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST *You*	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	4♠	pass
pass	6♦	dbl	pass
pass	6NT	dbl	all pass

As you may have guessed, these two problems occurred on the same deal, though at different tables. The event was the 1988 World Teams Olympiad in Venice, and this was the full hand:



If in the first problem you led a club as West, I hope that you chose the queen. After this held the trick, you would be able to give partner his heart ruff for one down. In fact, the problem was academic, for at the table was the actual auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	4♠	pass
pass	6♦	dbl	6♥
pass	pass	dbl	pass
pass	redbl	all pass	

East's double of 6♥ was in a fit of rage that the opponents had escaped from the doomed 6♦. His attempt to cash the two top clubs was only 50% successful, and he recorded minus 2070. At the other table, the bidding really went the way I described it the first time. This time, the club lead was more effective, and the 1100 penalty meant a swing of no fewer than 22 IMPs!

A BATTLE OF WITS

Most people, even keen bridge lovers, have little idea of what a major tournament is like. Thanks to television, tennis fanatics can follow every stroke of Wimbledon, golf enthusiasts can agonize with their heroes over every missed putt, and even chess players can hear the thoughts of the grandmasters and watch the concentration on their faces as they pore over the board.

Because bridge has limited spectator value despite its huge following of players, very few are given the chance to experience the format or the atmosphere of a major tournament. I suppose the popular image would be of a group of intellectuals operating with the intensity of brain surgeons in the still of a library. This is far from the truth.

In 1994 over sixty countries sent their finest players to the 9th NEC World Bridge Olympiad in Salsomaggiore, a popular spa town to the south of Milan. The sun shines on the busy trattorias and the lazy mood and the mouth-watering cuisine make it difficult to resist

the holiday atmosphere. Most of the participating nations do not boast star players, and have no hope of winning. They play for the thrill of the competition and the pleasure of making new friends — the true Olympic ideal.

Bridge players are not by nature an abstemious crowd, but during the day's play they will eat little and drink no spirituous liquor for fear of impairing concentration. When the day is ended, they make up for lost time, and wine and beer gradually enhance the volume with which brilliancies are trumpeted and blunders excused. Wonderful moments of bridge are tossed casually from table to table like basketballs. National character is revealed in the telling of tales, excited French voices arguing with gentle Chinese, the soft-spoken but persistent Icelanders holding their own against the volatile Brazilians. Some of the hands are discussed only briefly, then vanish in the night, while others are destined for a wider stage. Some, like this one, may even become immortal.

Michel Perron, a bridge teacher from Paris who says little but whose play speaks volumes, picked up this hand as South:

♠ — ♥ A K J 8 5 3 ♦ A 9 8 7 4 3 ♣ 6

You need time in the auction to describe a freak hand such as this, but far more often than not you do not get it, and Perron's first chance to bid came at the four-level:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Chemla		*Perron*
1♠	pass	3♠	4♠
pass	5♣	pass	5♦
all pass			

Perron decided to risk the five-level in order to show his strong two-suiter — the chances were that the opponents would push him there anyway. By bidding four spades for takeout, then removing five clubs to five diamonds, he described a hand of great power with both red suits. Chemla put down his dummy, and this was what Perron could see:

NORTH
♠ J 7 6 5
♥ 9 6
♦ 10 2
♣ A 10 5 4 3

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ A K J 8 5 3
♦ A 9 8 7 4 3
♣ 6

West led the ♠A, which Perron ruffed. He laid down the ♥A, on which West dropped the ♥Q, dummy the ♥9 and East the ♥2. Now, if the diamonds divided 3-2 as expected, Perron would be able to play ace and another trump, and later cross to dummy in clubs to take the marked finesse against East's remaining ♥1074. Michel Perron paused for a while in thought, and turned his head to look at his left-hand opponent. Then he smiled, and he led not the ♦A but the ♥K! West followed with the ♥10, for this was the full deal:

NORTH
♠ J 7 6 5
♥ 9 6
♦ 10 2
♣ A 10 5 4 3

WEST
♠ A 10 8 3 2
♥ Q 10
♦ K 6
♣ Q J 9 8

EAST
♠ K Q 9 4
♥ 7 4 2
♦ Q J 5
♣ K 7 2

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ A K J 8 5 3
♦ A 9 8 7 4 3
♣ 6

What perfection! One duelist feints with a devilish deception, but the master has seen it all before and produces the perfect riposte. West, the vanquished, feels only elation in his defeat, for the fact that Perron paid him the compliment of assuming that he would find such a falsecard is in itself a victory. West writes 450 in the minus column with a feeling of pride, not dejection.

You may ask how I know so much about West's emotions on this particular deal. Well, if I told you that the score in this match was France 20 — Pakistan 10, would that be any help?

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Friday, January 19, 1990, 3:30 p.m. Heathrow, on the runway — I am writing this in my airplane seat on my way from London to the Hague. This weekend, sixteen pairs from around the world will compete in the *Staten Bank* World Top, a tournament modeled on the *Sunday Times* event.

Bridge has become incredibly popular in the Netherlands; the championship is not only viewed by thousands of kibitzers and autograph seekers but is shown on national television. Players adorn themselves in black and white tuxedos and play in rooms of lush decor, glistening chandeliers and red velvet carpets.

When I fly, I often recall bridge deals from the past. (More often than not I reflect on disasters.) The first time the event was held, three years ago, I partnered *Bridge Today* editor, Mathew Granovetter, a player who has the rare ability to remain calm when up against great adversity. (His bids often place him in that position.) Also, I am the first to admit that when playing with me, this

attribute is especially important, since I am sometimes my own partner's adversary.

On this occasion, however, it was one of my bids that did us in; and though I was the author of the scenario, I failed to write a happy ending. The rest of the cast from the following tragedy are Omar Sharif and Paul Chemla. Everyone knows Omar. I remember him in *Lawrence of Arabia* and *Doctor Zhivago*, but I liked him best as Nick Arnstein, the debonair leading man to Barbara Streisand's Fanny Brice in *Funny Girl*.

At the bridge table, Omar is not an actor; he is a superior player, with a mind like a computer, and a competitor par excellence. Chemla, his partner from Paris, is a star only at the bridge table, but is great, both in his ability always to play the right card and in his physical appearance. A large, jovial and expressive man, who enjoys his caviar and soufflés almost as much as his bridge, Chemla is dangerous at the table in more ways than one.

NORTH
♠ J 9 2
♥ K Q 10 5 4
♦ 4
♣ K J 8 5

WEST
♠ A 7 6 5
♥ 9 8
♦ A 9 2
♣ 10 9 4 3

EAST
♠ 8 4 3
♥ J 6
♦ Q 10 8 7 5 3
♣ A 6

SOUTH
♠ K Q 10
♥ A 7 3 2
♦ K J 6
♣ Q 7 2

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Chemla	*Editor*	*Omar*	*Me*
			1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1NT
pass	3♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

Against my 3NT, Chemla found the brilliant lead of the ♦9. Omar put in the queen, and when I went to dummy's ♥K to play a club, Omar went up with the club ace to return the ♦10.

I had to consider how likely it was that Chemla had led from A-9-x. Or was it more likely that the cunning Sharif had played the ♦Q from A-Q-10-x-(x) and was now leading back the ten? Both were fantastic scenarios, and I eventually went with percentages (playing for the ace to be on my right — 50%) by covering the ten with the jack. This lost to the ace, and Chemla led back a diamond to Sharif's hand. That meant down three.

When a bridge player goes down three tricks in a contract he could have made, he is very unhappy. The truth is, I was furious. Had this been the France of a hundred years ago, I could have challenged Chemla to a duel at dawn. Had it been a scene from one of Omar's films, I could have threatened to steal the leading lady for revenge. But in reality, it was a world-class bridge tournament, which meant I had to congratulate my opponents. So, I shook both their hands and tried to remember who it was who said of Sharif, "He's not just a pretty face."

3:45 p.m. Cruising above the white cliffs of Dover — the plane has reached a decent altitude and I can resume writing on the seat-back tray. Okay, perhaps I did hog the last hand, but I enjoy declaring. There are few occasions when I like watching from the dummy's position. One of those, however, was during my very first appearance in a Dutch tournament. It was a deal from a match played between Pakistan and New Zealand during the 1980 Olympiad.

This international tournament was held in the town of Valkenburg, a Dutch resort of small hotels, quaint shops, and aromatic bakeries, where our team spent many a tea-break discussing the finer points of slam bidding over apple pie and hot chocolate. It's fascinating to wander through a small town like this during a bridge Olympiad. One hears people on the street speaking in foreign languages, but always referring to some bridge idiom like an ace, a king, a Vienna Coup or a triple squeeze.

The players who make up their country's team can be as different from each other as they are different from other teams in race, nationality, and language. Some teams have players who have spent most of their lives at the rubber bridge table. Other teams consist of amateurs who have other careers and treat bridge as a hobby. My

partner, Salim Masood, is mixture of the two. A family man, he works hard and must find the time to play his bridge. Yet when he is playing for his country, he cannot be distinguished from the top professionals who play every day of their lives. Add to that the extra pressure of playing with me (again I admit I have a quick temper and demand perfection), and you can see that Masood deserves the laurels he has received for his bridge achievements.

As I was saying, no one enjoys being declarer more than I, but Masood is one of the few partners with whom I feel confident when laying down my dummy. He is a declarer who gives very little information to the opponents, and on the following deal he made a four-spade contract by completely fooling the player in the West position. He did this by making a rare double-duck, which demonstrates the importance of imagination in the game of bridge.

NORTH
♠ K J 6 3
♥ 10 5 3 2
♦ A 9 4 3
♣ K

WEST
♠ 9 8
♥ Q 4
♦ Q J 8 5
♣ Q 7 5 4 2

EAST
♠ Q 7
♥ A K 8 7
♦ 10 7
♣ J 10 9 6 3

SOUTH
♠ A 10 5 4 2
♥ J 9 6
♦ K 6 2
♣ A 8

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Me		*Masood*
		1♦	1♠
1NT	4♠	all pass	

Opening lead: ♦Q

The bidding requires some explanation. The New Zealand pair,

sitting East-West, were playing a high-tech system of relays and computer-like sequences. East's opening bid of 1♦ was artificial. It meant that he had 10-15 points and no five-card major. He could not open 1♣ because that would have meant a stronger hand. Masood, South, overcalled 1♠ and West bid 1NT, which meant he had the minors. I was North and decided to end all this nonsense by leaping to game.

Masood studied the hand before playing to the opening lead, a practice that average players would do well to copy. With four obvious red-suit losers, Masood's only chance seemed to be to pitch one of his hearts on dummy's fourth diamond. This would mean he would have to give up a diamond trick and the opponents would have to refrain from cashing their three heart tricks. Rather than expose the situation, Masood ducked in both hands, pretending that he did not hold the king of diamonds.

Pity poor West, who now had to find a heart shift to defeat the contract. Instead, he lead a 'safe' trump at Trick 2. Masood silently said, "Thank you very much," and drew a second round of trumps. Then he cashed the ♦K, noting the fall of East's ten, and led a diamond from his hand, finessing West's jack with dummy's A-9. On the ♦A he discarded a losing heart.

This beautiful double-duck not only succeeded in fulfilling the contract, but it also put a psychological damper on East-West's outlook for the rest of the match. Players do not like it when the opponents score a game. They like it even less when they are fooled in the process — which is one reason I enjoy playing with Masood: if I am his partner, he can never do it to me!

4:00 p.m. Losing altitude over the Netherlands — landing music comes on the airplane speaker. I recognize the singer as Ella Fitzgerald and the composer as the legendary Jimmy Webb. One of the lyrics is: "This time we almost made our poem rhyme, didn't we?" Webb must have written it for the Pakistan bridge team — it fits too well. Twice in the last decade we have lost in the final of the World Championships.

Sometimes placing second can be more painful than coming in last. To be so close to victory that you can almost touch it and then to have it swept away in front of your eyes is similar to almost making that poem rhyme.

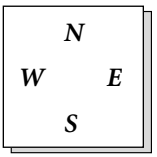
The last occasion was Miami Beach, Florida, the summer of

1986. Teams from over fifty nations around the world came to the Bridge Olympiad with hopes of winning. However, many found themselves in bathing suits before the week was over. Spending your day drinking frosty pina coladas at poolside was not everyone's idea of fun, especially those who had just been knocked out of the main event.

The Pakistan bridge team is made up of players who play tough at the table but exhibit warmth and friendliness after the game. On this occasion, Jan-e-Alam Fazli was my partner, and Nisar and Nishat my teammates. We reached the final, where we lost to an American team of Manfield-Woolsey, Lipsitz-Silverman and Boyd-Robinson. The following deal was one of the keys to the American team's victory.

NORTH
♠ A K Q 10 7 4 3
♥ A 3
♦ K
♣ A 10 7

WEST
♠ 6 5
♥ 8 5
♦ A 5 4 3
♣ 9 8 6 5 2



EAST
♠ 9
♥ Q J 7 6 4 2
♦ J 10 9 7 6 2
♣ —

SOUTH
♠ J 8 2
♥ K 10 9
♦ Q 8
♣ K Q J 4 3

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Me	*Woolsey*	*Fazli*	*Manfield*
	2♣	2♥	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♥
pass	6♠	dbl	pass
pass	redbl	pass	6NT
all pass			

I was West and heard North open a strong two-bid, my partner overcall 2♥ and South respond 2♠, an artificial bid showing two

kings. North bid spades naturally and South cuebid.

When North jumped to slam, my partner, Fazli, doubled. This was intended as lead-directing: "I have a void, partner; please give me a ruff on opening lead."

Now I would have led a club, given the opportunity. Unfortunately, our opponents were well schooled in escaping into safer waters. North made a spectacular redouble which showed willingness for partner to run to 6NT if he held an honor in every unbid suit. I led the ♦A and for a moment received the thrill of seeing dummy's singleton king. But South won the next lead with his ♦Q and claimed twelve tricks.

Ah well. The poem did not rhyme for us — but it did for them. Right now my seat belt must be fastened for landing. If bridge is poetry, there are many more haunting refrains about to be composed.

BUYING FUTURES

Two of the best pairs events in the world are held within a single week. The *Cap Gemini* World Top Pairs Tournament is held in the Netherlands on the third weekend in January. Three days later, the *Macallan* International Pairs Championship begins in London.

Both events are tremendous opportunities for European bridge lovers to watch the world's best pairs in action. Since the World Championships themselves are always held outside Europe, and the Olympiad happens (of course!) once every four years, these two tournaments are the only chance that many people will have to see the great players from the Americas at the table. Unless you arrive early, grab a seat, and hang on to it for all you are worth, you will find that it's standing room only at the *Cap Gemini* and the *Macallan*.

Which tournament do I prefer? As a rule, there is nothing to choose between them — but in 1995 there was, for I was fortunate enough to win the *Cap Gemini*. Not 'fortunate' in the sense that the

cards ran well for me — after all, the hands are duplicated at the eight tables in play. Nor 'fortunate' in the sense that our opponents played badly while others played well — the standard of the pairs in the tournament was such that we were always up against aggressive bidding and accurate play. My great good fortune was that my partner, Michael Rosenberg, was still demonstrating the form that took him to the World Teams Championship the previous year, and to second place by a fraction in the World Pairs. We gained a bundle of points on this deal, where Michael was the only successful declarer in a slam contract:

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ K J 10
♥ A 10 6 5
♦ A K 9 7 3
♣ A

WEST
♠ 9 8 5 4
♥ 8 2
♦ 6 5
♣ K J 9 7 6

EAST
♠ Q 2
♥ K 3
♦ Q J 10 2
♣ 10 5 4 3 2

SOUTH
♠ A 7 6 3
♥ Q J 9 7 4
♦ 8 4
♣ Q 8

At almost every table South played in 6♥. Our West did well to avoid a 'safe' spade lead, which would have solved all declarer's problems. He led a club, won by the singleton ace in dummy. At this point, other declarers relied on one of two finesses or a 3-3 diamond break (certainly good odds — over 80%). They played a spade to the ace, lost a heart finesse to East's king, and later played three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third. When the suit failed to divide, they took a spade finesse, but this unluckily lost to the now singleton queen, and one down was the normal result.

Michael Rosenberg gave himself an additional option — he is an options trader, after all! Winning the club lead in dummy, he imme-

diately played three rounds of diamonds, ruffing the third with the ♥9. If West had been able to overruff with the ♥K (which meant that the heart finesse was right all along), Michael would have had to guess spades — but he would first obtain a good count on the hand, giving himself much better than a 50-50 chance in the suit. When in practice West discarded on the third diamond, Michael was able to make the contract without guessing at all. He ruffed a club in dummy, ruffed another diamond with the ♥Q, and played a trump to the ace and a trump to East's king. With only black cards left, East had to return a spade into the tenace or a club for a ruff and discard — either way, Michael had his contract.

As readers may know, I am incapable of working out any but the simplest percentages, and even those I sometimes get wrong. Calculating the odds on Michael's line of play being successful is the kind of thing that would take me about a week with a towel wrapped around my head. One thing is for sure, though — he knew exactly what he was doing. Thank you, partner!

Destination 4

London

THE WINNER AND STILL CHAMPION

No one who saw the classic film *The Cincinnati Kid* will forget the moment when Edward G. Robinson — 'The Man' — turns over his hidden card and reveals the straight flush that beats the Kid's full house. "You're good, Kid," says The Man, "but while I'm around, you'll always be second best."

This line flashed through my mind when I played in the *Macallan* International Pairs Tournament at the White House Hotel in London. The players wore black tie, the surroundings were luxurious, the number of spectators broke all previous records — it was a refreshing change from the sometimes rather mundane air of many bridge tournaments. My partner was Bob Hamman, the number one player on the world ranking list today. But my opponents were if anything even more illustrious — Pietro Forquet and Giorgio Belladonna of Italy, part of the unparalleled Blue Team who won every championship in sight in the 1960s and 1970s. Forquet and Belladonna, both in their seventies, were lying second in the tournament at this stage — they faded slightly towards the end to

finish sixth, but they are living proof of the fact that age is no barrier to success at bridge. If you're good enough, you're young enough.

With Belladonna on my right, I felt very much like the Cincinnati Kid up against The Man as I picked up the South hand on this deal:

E-W Vul.

NORTH
♠ K 9 7 4 3
♥ 9 8 2
♦ A 9 4
♣ A 3

WEST
♠ J 5 2
♥ J
♦ 8 7 6 3
♣ Q 10 9 6 5

EAST
♠ A Q
♥ 10 7 6
♦ Q J 5 2
♣ K 8 4 2

SOUTH
♠ 10 8 6
♥ A K Q 5 4 3
♦ K 10
♣ J 7

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Forquet	*Hamman*	*Belladonna*	*Zia*
		pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	2♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

Forquet led the ♦7. I won Belladonna's jack with the king, and started drawing trumps. If these had divided 2-2, I would have had a sure line for the contract — draw trumps, eliminate diamonds, and play the ♣A and another. But when the trumps did not divide, I had to play three rounds of the suit and look for some other plan to dispose of my black suit losers. I ran the ♦10, but Belladonna won with the queen and switched to a club to my jack, Forquet's queen and dummy's ace. I discarded a club on the ♦A and ruffed a club, on which Belladonna's king appeared. Next I played a spade — six, two, three, queen. Impassively, Belladonna played another club which I had to ruff. I led the ♠10. Forquet played the five.

Time stood still as I calculated. Belladonna had so far played the king of clubs, the queen and jack of diamonds, and the queen of spades — eight high-card points. The ♠A in addition would give him twelve, with which he would surely have opened the bidding. Confidently, I asked Hamman for dummy's king of spades. Ace. Ouch!

Belladonna had indeed passed his balanced twelve points as dealer. Not only that, he had carefully shown me the king of clubs so that I would have a count on his hand and go wrong in the spade suit. At every other table, East had opened the bidding, so I was the only declarer to go down. As I left the table, I knew what Giorgio was thinking: "You're good, kid, but while I'm around..."

PLAY THIS HAND WITH ME

Everybody in the club could see that H. was in a great mood. In fact, H. — more commonly known as the 'Bridge Partner from Hell' — was literally bubbling over with bonhomie, armed as he was with his usual glass of champagne. With an arsenal of newly devised psychic bids waiting to explode on a terrified partner, H. was entirely in his element. Why, only a few deals ago he had opened three spades without looking at his hand! When his opponents unsportingly looked at theirs and doubled him for a 500-point penalty, H. was unrepentant. "They could have made three clubs," he unblush-

ingly explained to his apoplectic partner.

You might think that even H. would have difficulty finding cause for satisfaction in the unusual score of minus 1800 that he had incurred through defending 3NT redoubled with two overtricks. But since the bemused declarer had unwisely played H. to have something for his 'lead-directing double', he had taken only eleven tricks instead of the possible twelve, and been sharply reprimanded by dummy. The psychological edge that this gave to H.'s side was, reckoned the Partner from Hell, easily worth the points sacrificed to obtain it. Beaming happily, H. picked up this hand:

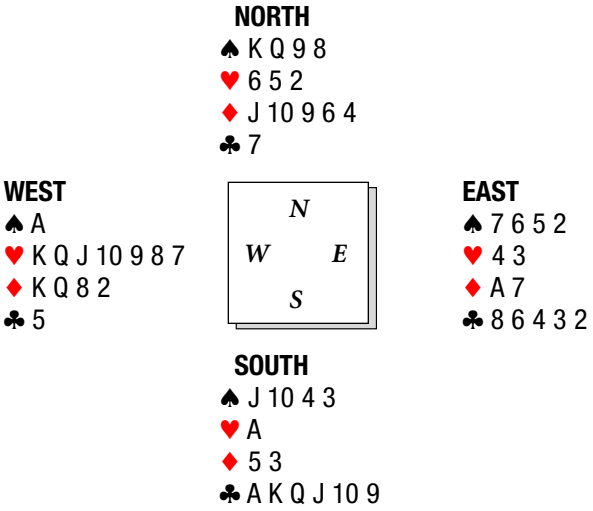
♠ J 10 4 3 ♥ A ♦ 5 3 ♣ A K Q J 10 9

In H.'s method, this was of course a standard opening bid of 1NT. After all, he had the requisite 15-17 high-card points, and the club suit looked useful for a notrump contract. The bidding continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			H.
			1NT
4♥	pass	pass	?

What action would you take now? Of course, you would not have been in this ridiculous position in the first place, since you would have opened 1♣ like a human being. But try, if you can bear it, to peer into the twisted mind of the Partner from Hell, and see if you can come up with his choice of call.

Pass, did you say? You are not trying — that would be a rational thing to do. Five clubs, which you might conceivably venture, is also too sensible a call to bear the true diabolical stamp. I'm sure you're ahead of me by now. "Four spades," said H. and the auction went ballistic. West bid 5♥, North bid 5♠, East bid 6♥ and H., with the air of a man putting the finishing touches to a masterpiece, bid 6♠. West doubled — H., as you can imagine, does not play many contracts undoubled — and this was the full deal:



Of course, everyone had pretty much taken leave of their senses by the time the six-level was reached — but that is precisely the atmosphere in which the Partner from Hell delights. West led the ♥K, which H. won to lead a trump. 'Knowing' that South had another heart for his 1NT opening, West tried to cash the ♥Q. H. ruffed, crossed to the ♠9 in dummy, ruffed another heart, drew trumps and claimed his contract.

"Sorry partner," he said. "I ought to have redoubled."

RIDING THE STREAK

Harry the Horse was in an ebullient mood. His sixth sense told him that this was going to be one of his lucky days, and as a life-long gambler he had learned to trust his intuition. True, his trip from New York to London the previous evening had not been perfect — the leg-room on the Concorde was inadequate for his six-and-a-half foot frame. But that discomfort had been quickly forgotten in the course of a profitable day at Ascot.

Now, as he strolled up Park Lane towards TGR's, the famous London rubber bridge club, he felt certain that his winning streak would continue. Harry cut 'The Paunch' as his first partner in the £100 game — a tough, ex-international player known for his healthy appetite and pompous manner. Their opponents were Freddie B., an American media mogul, and 'Moonbeam', the popular club professional.

The first two hands of the rubber did nothing to dent Harry's confidence. He made a game, then collected a penalty of 500 from the ever-exuberant Freddie against no more than a partscore. Harry dealt

the cards for the next hand with some aplomb. Dealer North:

N-S Vul.

NORTH
♠ K 3
♥ Q J 6 4
♦ A K 8 3
♣ A 10 5

WEST
♠ A J 8 4
♥ A K 10 3
♦ Q 7
♣ Q 6 4

EAST
♠ 9 7 5 2
♥ 9 8 7 5 2
♦ J 5
♣ 9 8

SOUTH
♠ Q 10 6
♥ —
♦ 10 9 6 4 2
♣ K J 7 3 2

The auction was one of the more remarkable in modern times:

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Moonbeam	*Harry*	*Freddie*	*Paunch*
	1NT[1]	pass	2♦[2]
pass	3♥[3]	pass	4♣[4]
pass	4♠[5]	pass	pass[6]
dbl	5♥[7]	dbl	6♣[8]
dbl	6♦[9]	pass	pass
dbl	all pass		

1. A strong notrump, 15-17 points.
2. A sign-off in diamonds.
3. Forgetting that he was in London. In New York, 2♦ would be a transfer to hearts, but such conventions are not permitted at rubber bridge on the other side of the Atlantic. With a maximum and good support for hearts, Harry had 'broken the transfer' by jumping to the three-level.
4. Another attempt at a sign-off.
5. Harry, mistaking 4♣ for the Gerber convention asking for aces, showed two of them.

6. Deciding to pass before finding his side in some huge number of hearts.
7. Not sure why he had been left in 4♠, Harry took the opportunity to return to the 'agreed' trump suit.
8. About to burst a blood vessel, the Paunch made one final attempt to play in a suit where his side would have more than four trumps.
9. At this point, it occurred to Harry that something was amiss, so he asked for a review of the auction.

As you may imagine, this took some time, but eventually the light dawned and Harry reverted to diamonds, only four levels higher than the Paunch had in mind when he naively introduced the suit for the first time.

Moonbeam, who had been deliciously aware since Harry's bid of 3♥, that his opponents were headed for the rocks, doubled the final contract and led the ♥A. The Paunch ruffed and led a spade, which Moonbeam as West had to duck, or declarer would have a discard for dummy's losing club. The ♠K won in dummy, and the ace and king of diamonds now took care of the defenders' trumps.

Now the Paunch had to guess the club suit, but making no mistake, he returned to hand with a heart ruff to play a club and finesse the ♣10. The clubs were all good now, and dummy's losing spade went away, so six diamonds doubled made with an overtrick for the unusual score of 2690 to North-South.

"I couldn't understand your bidding there, pardner," said the Horse, "but I surely appreciated your play. I guess, since I knew today was my lucky day, I ought to have redoubled!"

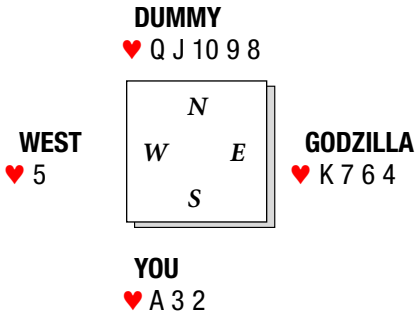
SILENCE OF THE SLAMS

When a bridge club boasts members with the *noms-de-guerre* of Hannibal the Cannibal and Godzilla, you might believe that sooner or later, sparks will fly in that club. You would be right.

Hannibal was named, of course, after the character so chillingly portrayed by Anthony Hopkins in the Oscar-winning film *The Silence of the Lambs*. In the film, Dr. Hannibal Lecter was a psychopathic serial killer with a penchant for sipping a glass of Chianti as he literally devoured his prey. His bridge equivalent, to be found in every club, similarly makes a meal of his victims — usually his unfortunate partners.

Godzilla is a bridge fanatic who can be found without fail at the club. He has a lack of pretense to ability which is entirely justified, but nothing detracts from his devotion to the game. On the contrary, he seems to revel in disaster, and needs no excuse to commit monstrous *faux pas* and bestial errors which have given him his sobriquet.

Godzilla plays the game according to the book — he knows all the rules, and will follow them to the letter. If you ever have this trump suit to play against Godzilla:



you do not have to worry about the 4-1 break, which would mean that you had a loser against a human opponent. Just lead the queen from dummy and Godzilla will play the king, for 'cover an honor with an honor' is one of the rules that he always obeys.

Another thing about Godzilla — he always leads the fourth highest card of his longest suit against notrump. If he has A-K-7-6-5 of a suit, he will lead the six against 1NT, 3NT or 6NT. Some of the club members who have made a study of prehistoric life forms claim that he would even lead the six against 7NT, but this theory remains unproven.

Hannibal the Cannibal is not actually a bad player, but he is a big loser because his chief delight is to set diabolical traps for the opponents into which his partner always seems to fall instead. The club psychiatrist says that this is evidence of a sublimated desire to murder his brother in revenge for preventing him from returning to the womb as a child, but the rest of us just think he's a raving lunatic.

The regular kibitzers had been keeping track of the mounting tension between Hannibal and Godzilla. The wise ones knew that it was only a matter of time before an eruption took place.

It happened on this deal:

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ A Q J 7
♥ A K J 6 5
♦ 9 7
♣ 6 4

WEST
♠ 8 3
♥ none
♦ A K Q J 10 4 2
♣ J 10 9 3

EAST
♠ 10 5
♥ Q 10 9 7 4 2
♦ 8 6 3
♣ Q 7

SOUTH
♠ K 9 6 4 2
♥ 8 3
♦ 5
♣ A K 8 5 2

The opponents, two normal human beings, bid the North-South hands well:

WEST	**NORTH**	**EAST**	**SOUTH**
Hannibal		*Godzilla*	
	1♥	pass	1♠
4♦	4♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

Hannibal was on lead with the West hand to a contract of 6♠. South no doubt had a singleton diamond, so it seemed that Hannibal would require a heart ruff to defeat the contract. But how could Godzilla be given the lead?

Hannibal found the only chance with the brilliant lead of the ♦4! He was playing Godzilla for the ♦9, the entry needed to give Hannibal a heart ruff. This was a master stroke, typical of his crazed genius.

The declarer, not for a moment suspecting that dummy's lowly ♦9 would win the first trick, reached automatically for the ♦7. Godzilla, having as usual no clue what was happening, followed one of his rules — 'third hand plays high'. The eight of diamonds held

the trick. The monster almost fell off his chair in surprise at his good fortune. But he knew better than to disdain such a windfall, and with a triumphant roar he immediately returned... the six of diamonds!

Declarer ruffed the diamond return and, after drawing trumps and establishing his fifth club, was able to claim the contract. There was a deathly silence around the table as Hannibal, his master plan thwarted, started to shake with rage. Through clenched teeth, he savagely attacked Godzilla, displaying a fine repertoire of insults which continued for several minutes without hesitation, deviation or repetition.

The guilty Godzilla attempted a few pathetic excuses. "How could I know?" he bleated, but nobody had ever been able to answer that question, since it was not clear that Godzilla possessed any vestiges of the power of human reason. Certainly Hannibal was not listening, his fury mounting to such heights that the kibitzers feared he might have a heart attack after all.

It was only when Godzilla tried to pacify his partner with the offer of a drink that Hannibal's contorted face changed expression. Suddenly, with a gentle and forgiving smile, he answered, "Thank you, my friend, for your kindness. May I suggest instead that we return to my room after the game? I have an excellent bottle of Chianti ready to drink."

REVENGE IS MINE

I don't know how many times I've announced that I will give up bridge but one of these days, I actually may do just that, perhaps even before the goddess of the game succeeds in driving me completely crazy. Really, it sometimes seems that she lies in wait to torment me with her cruel humor. They talk of Fate or Love as fickle, but any bridge player knows that they are mere children compared to the bridge goddess in a mischievous mood.

I was playing rubber bridge at TGR's, London's latest and most luxurious addition to the Bridge Club scene. The stakes were high — astronomical, if you want the truth — and the champagne plentiful if not vintage. Altogether, the perfect setting.

I was dealer, both vulnerable, and picked up a hand of which dreams are made:

♠ A ♥ A K Q 10 9 5 ♦ — ♣ A K 10 9 7 6

The bidding commenced:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			Zia
			2♥[1]
pass	3♥[2]	pass	?

1. Strong two bid.
2. Four-card heart support, 5-8 points.

About to bid the obvious 7♥, I hesitated. My left-hand opponent was Irving Rose, a British international and a street-wise player of vast experience. A strong auction like that would be a giveaway to him, prompting him to sacrifice in 7♠. Who knew how cheap that might be?

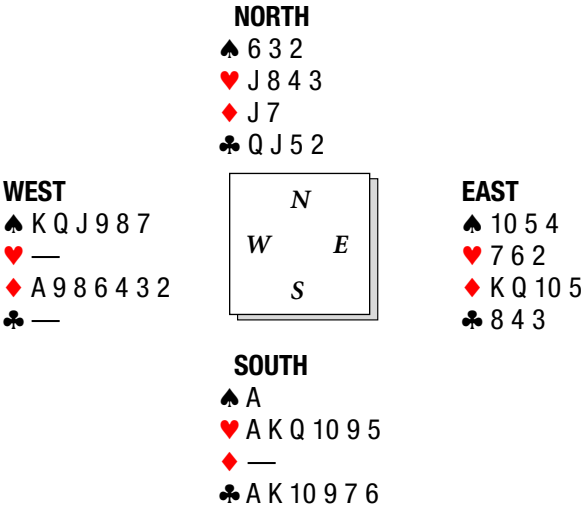
Trying a harmless red herring, I decided to 'bluff' with Blackwood. Maybe then our auction would sound less convincing, and maybe if Irving held the ♦A he would think I had made a mistake when I later bid 7♥. The auction continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Rose			*Zia*
			2♥
pass	3♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♣[1]	pass	5NT[2]
6♠[3]	?		

1. No aces — a good sign, for it meant the ♦A was indeed in an opponent's hand.
2. Asking for kings (as if I cared!).
3. My worst nightmare — suddenly Rose was there, diving into the auction for the first time at the six-level!

North doubled, which I hoped might discourage the opponents from further sacrificial ventures, and I naturally removed to 7♥, but with a sinking feeling. Sure enough, Rose was there once more. "Seven spades," he bid, and this time we had no option but to double.

The good news, I suppose, was that we defeated 7♠. The bad news was that it was by exactly one trick — I made the ace of trumps. This was the full deal:



They say the wheel of fortune turns full circle. It was only half an hour later that an opportunity presented itself if not for revenge, then at least for some measure of satisfaction.

My right-hand opponent opened with 2♣, vulnerable against not, and I was looking at:

♠ 7 4 3 2 ♥ A K Q J 6 5 ♦ 7 4 ♣ 3

What would you have bid?

The advantage of the opening 2♣ is that it immediately announces to partner that there is a game somewhere. The disadvantage is that it also lets opponents in on this fact before you've exchanged any other information.

If you would bid 2♥, 3♥ or even 4♥ I would agree — on a normal day. However, still smarting from the earlier tragedy, I was prompted by some mischievous impulse to bid 2♦! After all, I could always retreat to hearts if I was doubled — and why did the Muse of bridge invent psychic bids if she did not expect me to use them occasionally?

This innocent ploy reaped unhoped-for success, as the bidding continued:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Zia			
			2♣
2♦	pass	3♦	3NT
all pass			

I managed to find the gratifying if slightly unsporting lead of my fourth highest heart, for two down. This was the full deal:

NORTH
♠ Q 10 9 6 5
♥ 9
♦ 8 6
♣ K J 10 5 4

WEST
♠ 7 4 3 2
♥ A K Q J 6 5
♦ 7 4
♣ 3

EAST
♠ 8
♥ 10 7 3 2
♦ 10 5 3
♣ 9 8 7 6 2

SOUTH
♠ A K J
♥ 8 4
♦ A K Q J 9 2
♣ A Q

Yes, perhaps South should have avoided the trap and reached one of the available slams — in spades, diamonds or clubs. But if he had, perhaps I wouldn't have changed my mind about giving up the game — until next time.

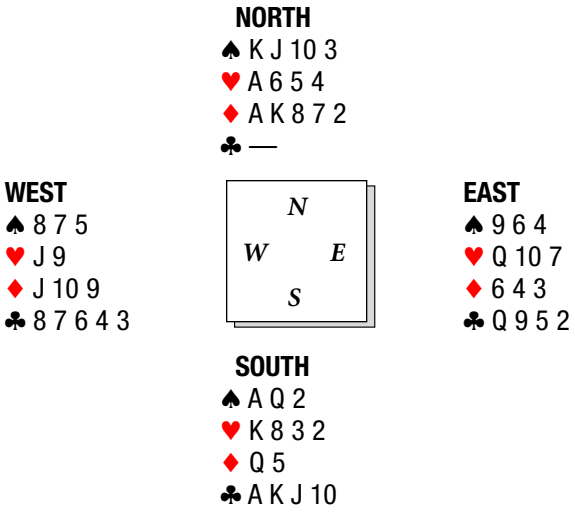
Irving Rose, who died in 1997, was by far the most colorful person I have ever known. His flair, style and charm were irresistible to all who came in contact with him. A British international player for many years, perhaps his greatest contribution to the game was to revive the wonderful *Sunday Times* tournament, in conjunction with the *Macallan* whisky company. Most of all, though, he was a friend whom I can never replace.

LUNATIC ANALYSES

What is your first childhood memory? This question is one of the keys with which psychiatrists unlock the door to your inner self. It is used so regularly that presumably it works, but seasoned rubber bridge players would say that a far more reliable way to investigate the psychological makeup of an individual is to watch him in action at the bridge table. A friend of mine, Dr. S., is a noted psychiatrist and a keen bridge player, and I had invited him to the club to watch our high-stake game. I had naturally warned him that even his great experience of disordered minds might be insufficient to cope with the collection of characters around the table.

South was Mr. H., a businessman who loves bridge so passionately that he bought the club. The number plate of his Rolls, 7NTXX, gives you some idea of his approach to bidding, and his flights of fancy during the auction bear witness to his theory that if he can fool two opponents but only one partner, he will end up ahead. North was Mr. M., known throughout the bridge world as

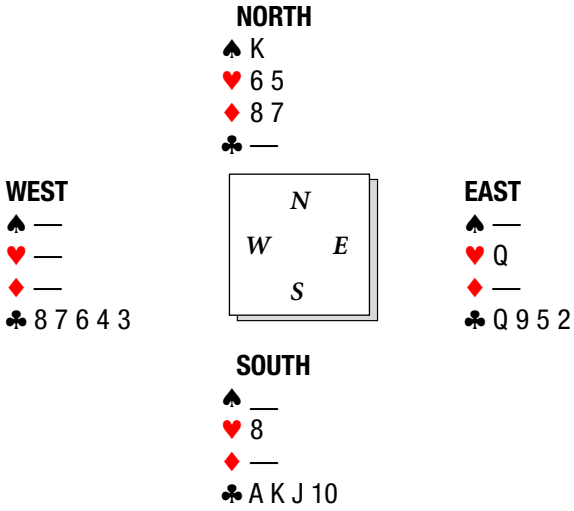
'Moonbeam', a Rhodes Scholar whose bridge rises to heights of brilliancy when he is concentrating on the game, and plumbs the depths of carelessness when his mind is occupied instead with one of his many 'nieces'. His bidding on occasion is even more bizarre than Mr. H.'s — as this hand will testify:



WEST	NORTH *Moonbeam*	EAST	SOUTH *Mr. H.* 1♣
pass	1♦	pass	3NT
pass	6♣	pass	all pass

West led the ♦J and Mr. M. displayed his amazing dummy with its void by way of trump support, explaining with impeccable Moonbeam logic: "I'm sure you have long clubs over there, partner — somebody must have!"

Dr. S. gasped in astonishment, but years of practice have inured Mr. H. to the sight of Moonbeam's dummies. Imperturbably, he cashed three rounds of spades, then the two top hearts, then the ace and king of diamonds. All of this passed off peacefully, and the position was now:



Mr. H. now ruffed dummy's king of spades with the ♣10 and exited with a heart, making the last three tricks with the ace, king and jack of clubs to wrap up his slam — six clubs bid and made on a 4-0 fit!

"I didn't want to give up the 100 honors that I was sure you held, you see," explained a happy little Moonbeam as he wrote down 1020 on his scorecard. Dr. S. leaned forward in his chair, his eyes gleaming. Surely if he could analyze the twisted mind of this Moonbeam, his place in psychiatric history was assured. "Excuse me, Mr. M.," he said. "I was wondering — would you mind telling me your first childhood memory?"

THE HOTTEST GUY IN THE WORLD

Hello chaps!" boomed a familiar voice from the doorway of the club, in what its American owner fondly, though mistakenly, believed to be an Oxford accent. A few newcomers looked up with astonishment, but the regulars did not have to raise their eyes from their cards to know that The Cowboy was back in town.

The Cowboy made his way to the table where the stakes were highest, and cut for partners with his customary cry of, "Enter the dragon!" He found himself facing the club's legal expert, a portly, dapper man who had learnt the Laws of Bridge by heart at the age of seven, and was thus able to save the club the expense of a rule book.

"What system shall we play, partner?" enquired the Legal Expert politely.

"Well," replied The Cowboy expansively, "since I'm in Britain I'll play it your way. Ay-col, four-card majors, limit raises, anything... as

long as you let me keep my strong notrump."

The Cowboy picked up his cards for the first deal:

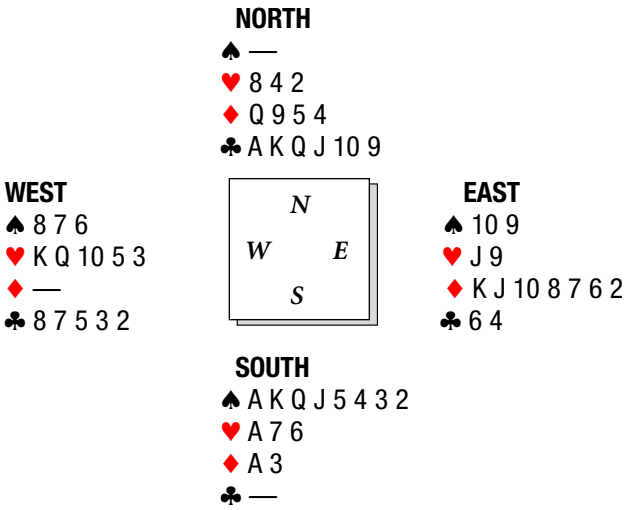
♠ A K Q J 5 4 3 2 ♥ A 7 6 ♦ A 3 ♣ —

His right-hand opponent passed. "Different here!" he announced, which, as the entire table knew from long experience, was what he said every time he was about to open with a bid of two clubs. The L.E. winced, for such behavior is a violation of several Laws, and replied with three clubs. The Cowboy bid three spades. The L.E. shrugged and bid a Blackwood four notrump. The Cowboy showed three aces with five spades and the L.E. jumped to seven clubs.

It had been part of The Cowboy's plan when he picked up this hand to play in clubs, and he was just about to bid seven spades when he remembered that the L.E. for all his pedantry and fastidiousness was actually a very fine player who presumably knew what he was doing. The Cowboy heaved a deep sigh.

"Pardner," he said, "there aren't a lot of people I'd trust about this, but you've always been a pretty straight shooter, so I'm going to pass."

This was the full deal:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	L.E.		*The Cowboy*
		pass	2♣
pass	3♣	pass	3♠
pass	4NT	pass	5♠
pass	7♣	all pass	

East, forgetting the bidding, led a diamond, bringing forth an exclamation of joy from West who detached a small trump from his hand. His pleasure was not lost on the L.E., who until then was quite unhappy that The Cowboy was going to be declarer instead of him.

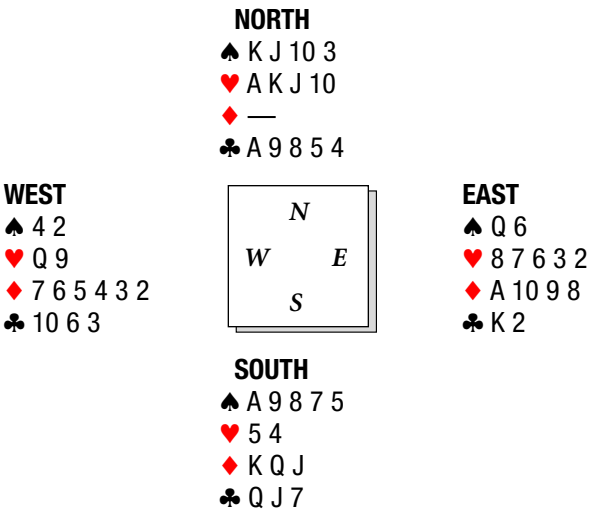
"Good though that lead may be," he said to West, "I fear that it is a lead out of turn. My partner was the first to bid clubs, and may now if he wishes..."

"Yes, yes," said The Cowboy excitedly. "I know all about it. I demand a diamond lead."

"I haven't got a blasted diamond!" said West, his elation turning to exasperation.

"In that case," said the L.E. urbanely, "you may lead whatever you desire."

There was of course, no lead to trouble seven clubs by South, and The Cowboy's delight was complete when he observed that his selfishness in sacrificing his 100 honors in spades was more than repaid by his partner's 150 honors in clubs. This was the next deal:



The Cowboy opened one spade with the South cards and the L.E. bid three clubs. The Cowboy should, of course, have raised to four clubs, but because he was playing 'Ay-col' and had therefore shown only four spades, he rebid his spade suit. The L.E., knowing that delicate investigation opposite The Cowboy was a waste of time, jumped to five notrump, the Grand Slam Force asking for spade honors, gambling that the rest of the hand would take care of itself somehow.

"Five diamonds," said The Cowboy confidently.

"Insufficient bid!" cried the entire table in unison. "Your partner bid five notrump, you know," said East on seeing The Cowboy's bewilderment.

"Shoot," said The Cowboy. "Just gimme the bottom line."

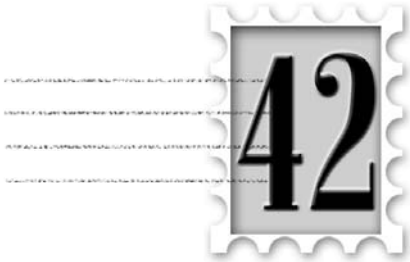
"The bottom line, as you put it," said his partner, "is that you may bid six diamonds without penalty, but if you make any other bid I am forced to pass for the remainder of the auction."

"Well," said The Cowboy, "no point in hanging about. Seven spades."

West led a club and the L.E. put down the dummy. The Cowboy shot West a suspicious glance, but eventually decided that he would have no reason to lead a club from the king. The Cowboy went up with dummy's ace of clubs, drew trumps in two rounds with the queen falling, and took a heart finesse. When the queen of hearts fell under the king on the next round, The Cowboy was able to throw two clubs on dummy's heart winners. It remained only to ruff a club, ruff a diamond and ruff a further club to make the dummy hand higher.

"He's an entry short if you lead a diamond to Trick 1," said East. "The contract," said the L.E. "can still be made in a variety of ways. And I am sure that my partner would have been equal to task, for as he has told us many times..."

"When you're hot, you're hot!" broke in the irrepressible Cowboy. "And", turning to East and West who were gloomily writing down the score for a grand slam in the minus column for the second deal in succession, "when you're not, you're not."



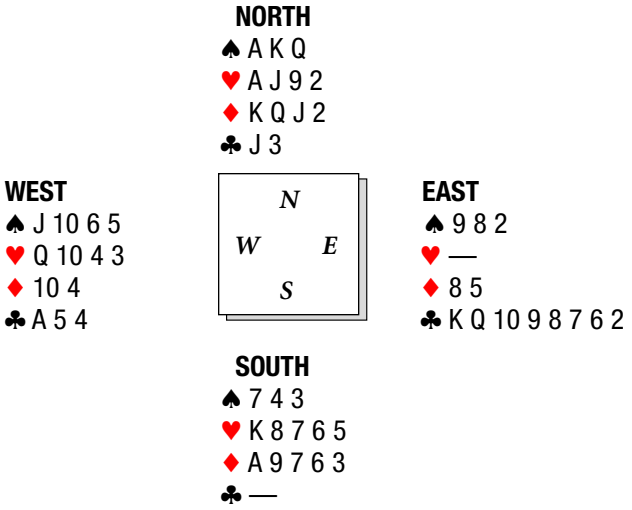
HELL IS OTHER PLAYERS

There has been a lot of debate among theologians recently about what Hell is. I will tell you what Hell is. Hell is not a fiery furnace crammed with the souls of dead sinners. Hell is a state of frozen disbelief; a state of existential despair, exclusively reserved for innocent and helpless dummies who are forced to sit and watch as their partners coldly butcher the simplest of contracts.

My guard was up as I cut the weakest player in an otherwise strong table at the club. I was determined that this time I would do all I could to steer him away from disaster, but if catastrophe struck despite my efforts, I would remain calm and try not to shatter his fragile confidence. On the first two hands I succeeded in only one of those objectives — we went for a telephone number against a partscore, then we let the opponents make a game that we ought to have defeated, but at least I did not start chewing the carpet. This was partly because I had just picked up a very good hand as North in fourth position:

♠ AKQ ♥ AJ92 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ J3

Nobody ever lets you open the bidding with twenty points these days. East, my left-hand opponent, opened 4♣, my partner passed and West bid 4♠. This was clearly a psychic bid based on a good club fit and little else but, for the moment, I could do nothing but double and await developments. Left-hand opponent passed and center-hand opponent bid 5♥. Certain that the enemy had a club fit, I raised to 6♥, whereupon something wonderful happened. East, fooled by his partner's psychic spade bid, sacrificed in 6♠! I was mentally adding up a huge penalty when I saw to my horror that partner was thinking — or doing what passed for thinking in his case. "Pass," I prayed silently — but this was Hell, so of course no prayer of mine would be answered. Sure enough, partner emerged with 7♥, and the double from West on my right sounded like the last trumpet of Armageddon. When the ♣A was led, I thought I might as well discover my fate at once, so I looked briefly at partner's hand as the play began. What I saw filled me with hope, for the full deal was:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Zia		
		4♣	pass
4♠	dbl	pass	5♥
pass	6♥	6♠	7♥
dbl	all pass		

Partner ruffed the opening lead with the ♥2 and laid down the ♥K. When East showed out, South swelled with pride and led a heart for a successful finesse of the nine. Now, you would have thought that at this point it was a simple matter to ruff dummy's remaining club, pick up West's trumps by way of a second finesse, and claim the contract. Wouldn't you?

No. This was Hell, nor was I out of it. My partner played dummy's *low* diamond to his ace and spread his hand with a flourish, announcing that he would draw the remaining trumps with the aid of the marked finesse! Of course, in so doing he had blocked the diamonds, so my remaining club could neither be ruffed nor discarded on declarer's fifth diamond. It had to be lost, and the grand slam with it.

IN THE (WRONG) ZONE

I may have found the perfect cure for jet lag. I flew in on a night plane from New York and went straight to the golf course. Although it was 3:00 a.m. Eastern Standard time, it was already 8:00 a.m. in London and my three friends were circling the first tee like predatory sharks. The buzz of competition kept fatigue at bay, and I felt sufficiently alert after the round to go on to the big game. Any of you who have played bridge all night will know that the game is just too fascinating to allow room for fatigue — and any of you who know H., the 'Partner from Hell', will realize that since I had just cut him for the first Chicago, I could not afford to succumb to any kind of lassitude. Sure enough, H. immediately lived up to his reputation. I picked up these cards as North:

♠ A 6 5 ♥ Q J 7 3 ♦ 10 8 6 4 2 ♣ 5

and the bidding started like this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Zia		*H.*
		2♠	3♠
dbl	pass	4♠	pass
pass	?		

The 2♠ was a strong opening — an Acol two bid — and H.'s 3♠ showed a two-suited hand of some kind, presumably hearts and a minor. When the opponents rested in 4♠, I could be certain that we had a good fit, and a sacrifice seemed worthwhile. Just in case H. actually had the minors, I made a takeout bid of 4NT. Playing with a lunatic, it's as well to take insurance if you can against whatever he might have perpetrated.

East, rather to my surprise, bid five diamonds over 4NT, apparently a natural call. I was expecting H. to bid 5♥ over this, since he seemed to be marked with hearts and clubs — but he bid 6♣ instead! What was going on? Didn't H. have hearts? Why hadn't H. passed five diamonds, or doubled it if he really had the minors? At any rate, I didn't want to play in 6♣, so when West doubled I retreated to 6♦. East doubled that, and H. ran in turn to 6♥, which was doubled by the whole street.

Of course only the Partner from Hell could bypass 5♥ doubled to end up in 6♥ doubled, I reflected as I put the dummy down:

NORTH
♠ A 6 5
♥ Q J 7 3
♦ 10 8 6 4 2
♣ 5

WEST
♠ 10 8 4 3
♥ K 10
♦ Q 5
♣ A J 10 9 4

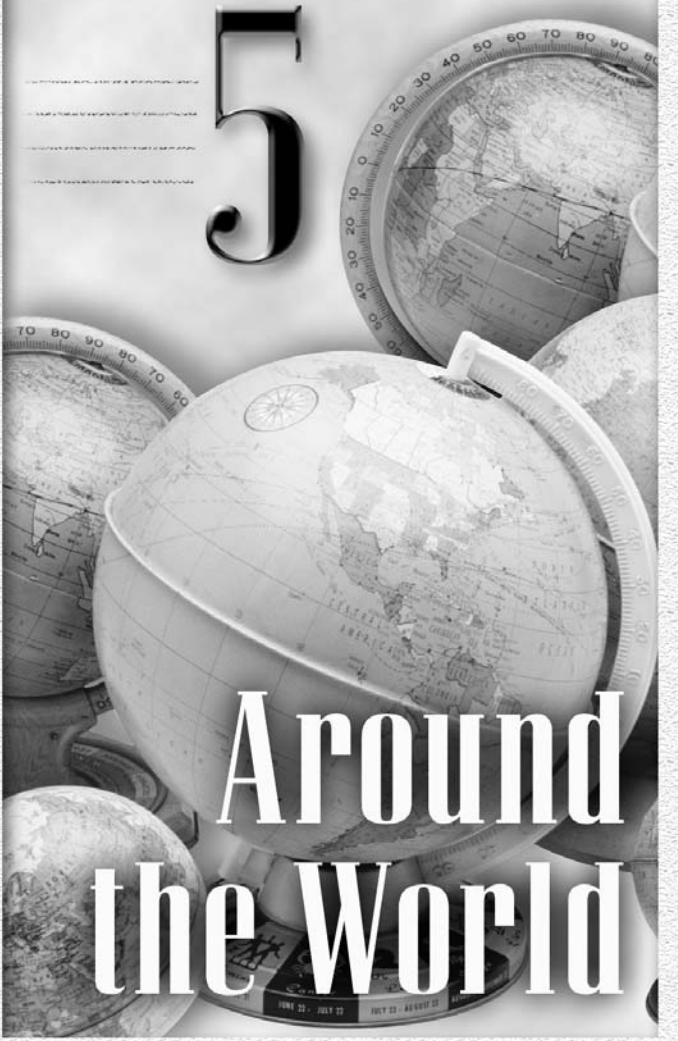
EAST
♠ K Q J 9 7 2
♥ 8
♦ A K J 9 7
♣ 2

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ A 9 6 5 4 2
♦ 3
♣ K Q 8 7 6 3

West, a studious type, knew all about leading trumps against sacrifices, and the possession of a holding such as K-10 doubleton wasn't going to deflect him from his principles. He found the scientific — some might say idiotic — opening shot of the ♥10, which H. won with dummy's jack. H. discarded his diamond loser on my ♠A, then led a club from the dummy. West won H.'s king with the ace and went into a trance, whereat H. — beaming impartially at me, the waitress and the lone kibitzer — informed him that it would make no difference. This was not true, for if West had stuck to his guns and continued in trumps, H. would have had no play for the contract. However, when West switched instead to a diamond, H. could arrange to ruff three clubs in dummy and make his slam.

But, satanically demonstrating that his attempted falsehood was actually a truth, H. did not play the hand in this obvious fashion, and went down anyway by drawing the last trump himself! The effort involved in resisting the overwhelming urge to strangle my partner completely washed away any vestiges of jet lag.

Destination 5



Around the World

LUCK OF THE FLAW

As a wise man once said, it's smarter to be lucky that it's lucky to be smart. But have you noticed that a good bridge players tend to be lucky players too? Even when they do something slightly wrong, more often than not, they seem to come out on top — something intervenes to save the day.

Britain's Justin Hackett is one of the world's best young players, and the following hand quite rightly earned him the 'Best Played Hand' award on the way to a gold medal in the World Junior Team Championships in Bali in 1995. Yet brilliant as Justin's play was, there was a flaw in his reasoning, as you will see if you follow closely.

Both Vul.

NORTH
♠ K Q 6 5
♥ K 10 8 5 3
♦ A 6 3
♣ J

WEST
♠ A 9 3
♥ 9 7
♦ K Q 5
♣ 10 7 5 4 3

EAST
♠ 10 7
♥ A J 6
♦ 10 9 7 2
♣ Q 9 8 2

SOUTH
♠ J 8 4 2
♥ Q 4 2
♦ J 8 4
♣ A K 6

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			Justin
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

The contract was the same at both tables, 4♠ by South. At each table West led the ♦K, which was allowed to hold the trick. West continued with the ♦Q, taken by dummy's ace and establishing South's jack. This did not matter, since dummy's diamond loser would be discarded on one of South's club winners in any case. The declarers led a trump to the jack and West's ace, and the Wests continued with a third round of diamonds to South's jack. The Souths drew the outstanding trumps with dummy's king and queen, then had to face the problem of avoiding two losers in hearts.

The New Zealand declarer made the correct technical play in the heart suit — he led low to the queen, then a low one back to dummy's ten. East took the jack, cashed the ace, and everyone moved on to the next hand. But Justin Hackett introduced a variation. He led the ♣J from dummy, on which East played low. He ruffed the ♣6 with dummy's last trump — and then, to the amazement of the Vugraph audience, he led the ♥10 from dummy and ran it when East played low! Of course, the ♥10 held the trick and the contract was safely home. It would have made no difference if East had covered the ten of hearts with the jack, for Justin would have

won the queen and led a low heart to the nine, king and ace, leaving the ♥8 a winner on the third round of the suit. You have all the evidence, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. Can you explain why Justin played the heart suit in the way he did, deliberately following a 25% line for his contract instead of the normal 50% finesse?

When Justin came to tackle the hearts, he had seen West produce the ♠A and the ♦KQ. Since East did not cover the ♣J with the queen, Justin assumed that West had that card also — wrongly, as we can see, but a reasonable assumption to make at the table. Placing eleven high card points with West, and recalling that West had not opened the bidding, Justin believed that the ♥J simply had to be with East, so he played for what he thought was his only chance — that the ♥9 was with West. He had done the right thing, though for the wrong reason, but at bridge it's results that count.

CURSE OF THE SPHINX

In 1989 I travelled to Cairo, Egypt, where the Middle East Bridge Championships were taking place. The winner would earn the right to represent the Middle East at the Bermuda Bowl in Perth, Australia.

Before the event began, some of us in the hotel bar (Egypt is one of the few Moslem countries that allows alcohol to be sold publicly) were discussing the various teams' chances. The consensus was that the pre-tournament favorites were India and my team from Pakistan. However, the word from the grapevine was that some of the Egyptian team were playing a forcing-pass system (and the rest a complicated natural-plus-relay style) and were hoping to surprise us. As it turned out, they not only surprised us, but beat the hell out of us! We lost to them in the semifinal before they went on to defeat India in the final.

By the way, the *Bridge Today* editors had awarded me the prize for the laziest reporter on the magazine, and to justify this, I returned with only a few deals.

During the round robin, I had a chance to play against my good friend and sometimes partner from Bombay, India, Jaggy Shivdasani. The Indian team was at its best and had reached the semifinals of the 1988 World Olympiad; we expected not only a tough match but some fireworks as well. We didn't have to wait long. Just a few hands into the match, I found myself having to make a difficult decision at the seven-level. I held the following hand:

♠ A Q ♥ Q J 9 8 6 4 ♦ 4 2 ♣ A 7 3

We were vulnerable against not, and East, Rajesh Dalal, a fine player who is as subdued as Jaggy is excitable, opened 1♠ on my right. I overcalled 2♥ and Jaggy, on my left, passed. Masood, my regular partner for over ten years from Karachi, jumped to 4♦.

Without looking at my hand, I would assume that he showed a singleton or void in diamonds, plus heart support. Looking at my two small diamonds, however, I would normally be suspicious that my partner had made a Kokish-type fit-showing call, bidding diamonds naturally with a heart fit.

But in time I remembered that this was Masood, famous for years for his reputation of being solid and reliable as the Sphinx. By the way, did you know that the face of the Sphinx is that of a Pharaoh of Egypt who wanted to live forever? (Don't we all?)

Anyway, I trusted him and bid four notrump, Key Card Blackwood. (We used to play 'Paki Blackwood', which allowed partner to hide an ace if he had already overbid. The Blackwooder could relay to double check for another ace, i.e. 1♠-3♠ 4NT-5♦ (one ace); 5♥(Are you sure?)-6♠ (O.K., O.K., I had two.) but Billy Eisenberg was our coach one year and changed all that.)

Suddenly Jaggy, on my left, came alive with a leap to 6♦! Thanks a lot, Jaggy! I thought that you were my friend! Masood bid 6♥ and this was passed around to Jaggy, who now bid 7♦! What's wrong with this guy? He used to be such a gentle kid. Now he bids like a mixture of the Incredible Hulk and Meckstroth-Rodwell.

I took back my thank-yous from the last round as 7♦ was passed around to me. Here is a review of the auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
I.H. Jaggy	*Masood*	*Rajesh*	*Zia*
		1♠	2♥
pass	4♦	pass	4NT
6♦	6♥	pass	pass
7♦	pass	pass	?

There was no doubt in my mind that my partner was void in diamonds for his pass of 7♦. But did he hold the ace-king of hearts and good clubs? Would my own teammates at the other table also sacrifice in 7♦? Dare I let Jaggy off with a mere three-or four-trick set when a grand slam was in the picture? Well, what would you do?

I bid 7♥ and when Rajesh flashed me the ♥A I wished that I were one of Egypt's famous mummies resting peacefully in his tomb. Partner's hand was:

♠ J 8 6 5 4 2 ♥ K 10 7 5 3 ♦ — ♣ K 2

Okay, first blood spilled was mine. Two deals later, I got even. I held this hand:

♠ Q 9 8 3 ♥ A 5 4 ♦ K 6 4 2 ♣ J 7

My partner opened 1NT, weak, and Rajesh, on my right, doubled. What would you do? Here was a good case for the old fashioned natural redouble rather than the modern run-out variety. We were playing redouble as natural, so that is what I did. Anyway, I was steaming. Jaggy on my left tried 2♥, double by Masood. This got redoubled for takeout and when the swirling sands from the Sahara settled, we were defending 3♣ doubled — down 1100.

The match became calmer after that, and I was happy just to come out even.

In case any future Bermuda Bowl participants are reading this — a word of warning: don't underestimate the Egyptians. They really can play. From the semifinals, here is a hand that illustrates why Egypt won the tournament. I invite you to look at the deal from my partner Masood's point of view, He held this hand:

♠ A J 2 ♥ A 8 7 5 ♦ — ♣ A K J 9 5 3

In third seat he heard me pass as dealer. His right-hand opponent Walid, who looks more like a basketball player than a bridge player

— but proved to be on the right court after all — also passed. Easy, well — but wait a minute! Alert! That pass had more meaning than hieroglyphics on the local pyramid wall. It showed a strong opening bid. Now what? Personally, if I held Masood's hand, my first reaction would be to double. Granted, the Sphinx might frown on the double of an opening pass (as well as the tournament director), but then how can you show a strong hand like this? If you overcall 1♣, it might get passed out. Masood actually found a unique solution: he passed also. What else? If this guy passes on the right to show a good hand, you pass to show an even better one — a forcing pass over a forcing pass!

Remember now, that accounted for three passes in a row and two players had excellent hands. This was really bridge in 'Tomorrow Land'. My right-hand opponent was forced to open with 1♦ in last seat, a relay, describing a weakish hand.

Having no more patience (and a weak hand), I decided to interfere with a lead-directing, nonvulnerable overcall of 2♦, and Walid passed again. Want a quick review?

WEST	NORTH *Masood*	EAST	SOUTH *Zia*
			pass
pass[1]	pass[2]	1♦[3]	2♦[4]
pass	?		

1. Strong.
2. Stronger.
3. Weak.
4. Weaker.

What would you bid with Masood's cards? Does anybody know what is forcing now? Does anybody care? (Doesn't this remind you of 'Soap' — that TV program where everyone was crazy?)

Masood made the obvious, practical 3NT call before three real passes hit the table. Unfortunately my hand was:

♠ — ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ K J 10 9 3 ♣ 10 8 7 6 2

Six clubs was laydown and reached in only two bids at the other table. The Egyptian South opened my hand with 2NT to show a weak hand with the minors (easy game, bridge), and the Egyptian

North bid 6♣. What else?

At the victory banquet, the custom of having the foreigners dance with the bellydancers was implemented by our Egyptian hosts. Both Jaggy and I were enlisted; pictures were taken but later destroyed — I hope ...

Oh well, if you can't lick 'em, join 'em. I am now working on my own forcing pass system. (I shall practice with my Mixed Pair partner, so that if it doesn't work out at the bridge table, I can try the 'invitational' pass instead.)

FALLING FLAT

Some of the most amusing stories from the world of tournament bridge concern 'flat boards', or 'pushes' as they are called in North America — deals on which there was no gain or loss to either side in terms of IMPs. However, on occasion the results at the two tables have been completely ridiculous, and it is pure chance that they happen to have resulted in the same score to each side. I well remember a deal on which, following a bidding misunderstanding, my partner and I had gone five down doubled and vulnerable in a contract of 7♦ — one opponent had Q-J-10-9 to seven trumps! This cost 1400 points, but at the other table our teammates had been doubled in 4♥ and made the contract with three overtricks, for a score of 1390. I was just starting my tournament career at the time, and it was with fear and trembling that I announced minus 1400 on the fateful deal. "Flat board," said my team captain, showing no emotion, and it was several days before I plucked up the courage to ask him what had happened.

This deal from the 1993 World Championships in Santiago, Chile was a comedy of errors from start to finish.

This was the bidding in the Open Room with the Netherlands, the eventual champions, sitting North-South and an Indonesian pair East-West:

N-S Vul.

NORTH
♠ A
♥ 7 6 4
♦ 10 9 6 4
♣ Q J 10 8 6

WEST
♠ Q J 9 7 4
♥ 3
♦ A K 8 7
♣ 4 3 2

EAST
♠ 10
♥ A Q 10 8 2
♦ Q J 5 3
♣ A K 7

SOUTH
♠ K 8 6 5 3 2
♥ K J 9 5
♦ 2
♣ 9 5

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	1♣[1]	dbl[2]
redbl	1♥	pass[3]	1♠
dbl[4]	all pass		

1. A strong club, simply showing 16 or more points.
2. Conventionally showing the major-suits.
3. Unable to double, which would be for takeout.
4. This looks natural, but in fact it was not — West had not noticed South's bid of 1♠, and imagined that he was doubling 1♥ for takeout, instead of 1♠ for penalties!

Now, remember that while everybody else at the table was playing in 1♠ doubled, West thought that the contract was 1♥ doubled. Bearing this in mind, it is not easy to see why he led the ♦A. The lead is a normal one, of course, but if the contract really had been 1♥ doubled by North, it would not have been West's lead. The other

players naturally accepted the lead, and West switched to his singleton heart. His intention, of course, was to prevent declarer from ruffing spades in the dummy! East won with the ♥A and returned the suit. South finessed the nine and West discarded a club. South now led a trump to the ace and a heart to the jack — again, West discarded a club on what he thought was a round of trumps.

South cashed the ♠K and led the ♥K, on which West discarded yet another club. Now South, out of hearts, led a small club on which West 'discarded' his ♠9. This, being a trump, won the trick — a fact of which West took some convincing, while East was growing progressively apoplectic. Eventually, the rest of the table managed to persuade West that spades were trumps, but it was too late. His unconventional use of his trump holding — saving them to ruff his partner's winners instead of declarer's — meant that one spade doubled made, for a score of 160 to the Netherlands.

The match ended, and the Dutch pair appeared nervously from the other room. On this deal, they had overbid the East-West cards to six diamonds — a poor contract at the best of times, and one which had gone three down on the actual distribution.

"Minus 150," said East with downcast head.

"Flat board," said South calmly.

BRIDGE, MY WAY

I had decided to write a book. I was actually excited about the idea and I intended to fill the pages with things about the game of bridge, its world and its people, all of whom I find so irresistible. I wanted to capture the flavor and atmosphere of the game; I didn't want to teach so much as to amuse.

I talked to my publisher, who asked me for an introduction to the book. I started it like this:

"If you've never been in love — don't read this book. If you don't think of yourself as a little bit crazy — don't read this book.

But if you believe in magic and fantasy, obsession and surprise,

read on — this book is for you.

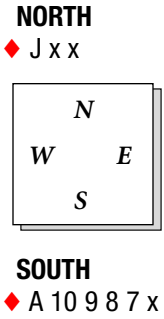
This book is for all those who have ever started doing something, and because they got so involved in it, they have lost track of time. Because the thing that I started doing was playing bridge and the time that went so painlessly by was my life."

The publisher was surprised that this was the start of a book about bridge. He invited me to the weekly company meeting to discuss the book further. Unfortunately, the meeting was scheduled for 10:30 a.m. — too early for me!

I decided to call the book *Bridge My Way*, and try to include the types of plays and thoughts that I love and have not seen discussed in writing before such as:

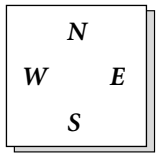
1. What is table presence?
2. How to use psychology at the table.
3. The best bridge players in the world.
4. 'Zia' plays — uncensored.
5. The secrets of winning at rubber and duplicate.
6. Money bridge.
7. The world of bridge as I see it.

Meanwhile, back to reality. Take a look at the suit combination in the diagram below:



You wouldn't think that with all the difficult card combinations around that this simple one should prove difficult. Bang down the ace or double finesse — so, what's the problem? Well...

NORTH
♠ A J 10
♥ A x x
♦ J x x
♣ A x x x



SOUTH
♠ x x x
♥ x x
♦ A 10 9 8 7 x
♣ K x

Say you reach 3NT (from your side — don't ask how) after opening a Weak Two-diamond bid. West leads a heart and you duck twice. You win the third round, and it appears as if West started with a five-card heart suit. Now you'd like to take five diamond tricks, but you must set them up without letting West on lead to cash his heart winners. So you lead the J♦ off the board.

East covers with the K♦, Well?

You should duck, as a first step — that's easy. But when you later play the second round of diamonds and East follows low, would you finesse or play the ace?

You should go up the ace, dropping West's queen.

Just think about it. If East had played low on the first round of the suit, you would have gone up with the ace. East would automatically play low with K-Q-x or K-x-x/Q-x-x. The only holding with which East would cover is K-x or stiff king. Therefore, it's always right to drop the queen offside on the second round of the suit (in the given scenario).

One of the best things about being a wandering bridge player is that you get invited to great places. In October of 1991, I went to Barbados to their Bridge Federation's anniversary tournament.

The atmosphere was terrific, plenty of sea, sun and sand, and not too much (or heavy) a bridge program. The hosts were effusive and warm — altogether a great holiday. We even played golf daily!

The first day the sea was a bit rough so I decided to test the waters in the pairs event. My first hand was this:

♠ Kxxxx ♥ xxx ♦ xxx ♣ xx

I was the dealer, white versus red. My kibitzers were looking hopeful, so I opened with 1♠. The opponents quickly got to four hearts, but my partner (they always hang you) doubled on his eleven count. The declarer, however, found a way to go down and I ordered another pina colada — welcome to Barbados.

To try and maintain symmetry, I also psyched on the last hand of the tournament; however, the size of the disaster prevents me from giving details.

I am well known as an overly optimistic bridge player and it is a well-known fact that confidence at the table is a must for success. However, there are times when humility too can help you.

The other night I held this hand:

♠ 10xxx ♥ — ♦ KQ10xxx ♣ Q10x

My partner, a regular guy, opened the bidding at 1♥. The next hand, a crazy genius, overcalled 1♠ and I doubled, negative. Perhaps 2♦ is a better bid, but with a void in partner's suit, I didn't want to be bullish.

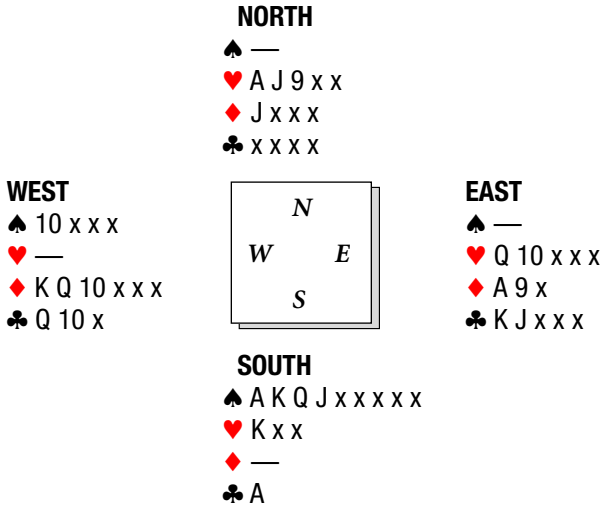
Lefty passed, my partner bid 2♣ and suddenly righty (who had previously bid only 1♠) jumped to 4♠. What would you bid with my hand?

Well, the answer really depends on who the four spade bidder is. I decided that this guy was as likely to be going three down as making, so I doubled. My policy in life is never to let crazy geniuses get away without a double. By bidding only 1♠, then jumping to 4♠, he is challenging you to double, gauntlet in the face type of thing. How can I refuse such a duel?

Luckily, the auction is not over. After lefty and partner pass, RHO says redouble! Suddenly I don't feel so good, but I pass anyway, and partner — bless him for doing what I was too stubborn to do — removes to 5♣. At this point the crazy genius bids 5♠! What is your call?

This is the picture where humility comes into the picture. You have to adjust, finally — for one thing, that crazy genius is not the only crazy at the table — for another, you made a very dumb bid.

And since you are not about to cash the first five aces, it is time to make a humble pass. In fact, it is the only way to stop the crazy genius from completely humiliating you by redoubling again and scoring an overtrick. The whole deal was:



Moral: When you're not sure who the pigeon is, be careful — it may be you!

Some people believe that only love or money can make you happy, but I think that a good bridge hand can compare with either, and is often very similar to falling in love. Try this scenario from an IMP game the other night and compare its pleasure with the beginning of a romance.

First: You cut your favorite partner and a good team — a pleasant start.

Second: Your opponents are a wily tough guy partnered with an equally famous inventor, whose specialty is concocting unusual bids that can be singularly dangerous.

Third: The stakes are very, very high.

All in all, you're at a very interesting dinner party when you pick up:

♠ x x ♥ A 10 9 x x x ♦ A Q J 10 x ♣ —

As you are thinking about the ways in which you might handle

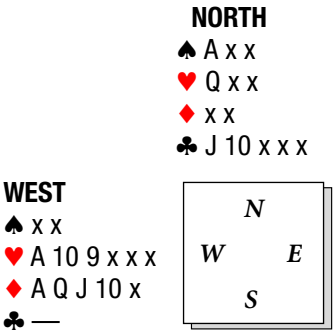
this hand, you hear it go: Pass, Pass, One heart (!) on your right — the equivalent in a romantic scene of catching sight of a beautiful girl across a crowded room.

You think for one second about an overcall of 2♦, feel embarrassed at your own sick thoughts and pass. However, the first warm flush occurs when LHO bids 2♥! She's looking straight at you and your eyes play the game of flirtation.

But now partner comes in with a double! She's smiling seductively at you and you are in heaven.

Everybody passes! She's walking straight toward you — it's too good to be true.

You lead a heart and see this in dummy:



And your heart misses a beat as your partner follows with a trump! (Inventor is on a three-card suit.) And the woman has a voice like Lauren Bacall's.

Declarer plays a club as you ditch a spade. Partner wins the ♣K and plays back a highish diamond. You win declarer's nine with the ten and play an ace and a heart. Your head is swimming and you feel a warm excitement as love pours into your subconscious.

And now to make sure that this experience is truly unforgettable, declarer plays another club. You pitch your last spade as partner wins and leads back a diamond...king...ace. You table the cards, claiming six down and 1400. Thank you Edgar, for changing the scoring.

Who said romance was dead?

REESE ON PLAY

If Géza Ottlik and Hugh Kelsey's *Adventures in Card Play* is my choice for the greatest bridge book ever, there is no doubt in my mind as to who was the finest writer on the game. Terence Reese's style, command of English, sense of humor, and ability to put over the most complex of ideas in the simplest of terms make him stand head and shoulders above his fellow authors.

When a uniformed policeman called for me on a recent visit to Karachi, I wasn't dismayed — in fact, I was expecting him. An invitation to dinner and bridge with Mr. S. and his wife is always a treat. Mr. S. is a high-ranking policeman whose overbidding has often risen to heights unscaled by the most intrepid explorers. Mrs. S. is an excellent declarer — she has to be, because of the contracts that Mr. S. invariably makes her play — and cooks just as brilliantly as she plays the dummy.

Late in the evening, happily gorged on Beef Wellington and giant morel mushrooms, the conversation turned inevitably to

bridge. The S.'s ten-year-old daughter ungraciously declined to be a fourth for a rubber, so instead, I gave my hosts a play problem that I had remembered from one of Reese's wonderful books. You find yourself as South in a contract of 6♠ after a brief auction of which Mr. S. whole-heartedly approved, since South's second call was an overbid in the grand manner:

NORTH
♠ 8 7
♥ 3
♦ A K 9 6 5
♣ A K 9 6 5

SOUTH
♠ A Q J 10 9 6 2
♥ A 2
♦ 3 2
♣ 3 2

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♦	pass	4♠
pass	6♠	pass	all pass

West leads the ♥K. How do you play?

Mrs. S., almost spilling the coffee tray in her eagerness to reply, said: "Only six spades? It's simple! I win the ace of hearts, ruff a heart in dummy, and play a spade to the ace followed by the ♠Q. I don't mind losing to the ♠K, because I easily make the rest. Come on, Zia — surely you can give us something harder than that!"

Mr. S., his years of police training having taught him never to rush into a situation without looking all around for possible traps, was less confident. "It looks easy, I'll admit," he said, "but perhaps it's too easy. There must be a catch..."

He brooded on the problem in silence for a while, as Mrs. S.

poured more coffee and shook her head indulgently at her husband's passion for complexity where everything appeared so simple. Finally, he looked up. "What happens," he asked, "if West wins the second round of trumps with the ♠K and East discards a heart, then West exits with a club?"

"I win and play a ..."said Mrs. S. at once, then slowed down considerably. "Oh," she said, a little less confidently. "If West has a singleton in one of the minors, I may not be able to get back the hand to draw trumps. Maybe it wasn't as easy as it looked." Mrs. S. was quite right — in order to return to hand, South must ruff a minor-suit card, and that involves cashing the ace and king of the chosen minor. If West by some chance ruffs the king, the contract is scuppered.

They looked at the deal in this new light for some time — so long, in fact, that I decided it was time to tell them about the Dentist's Coup. This painful-sounding process involves the extraction of danger cards from your opponent before things turn nasty for you. Here, after playing the ♥A and ruffing a heart, you should cash the ace of each minor suit before playing two rounds of spades. Now, whichever minor West returns, you can safely win in dummy and ruff a card in that suit with a high trump to return to your hand. "I should have known," said Mrs. S. "You never give us an easy problem!"

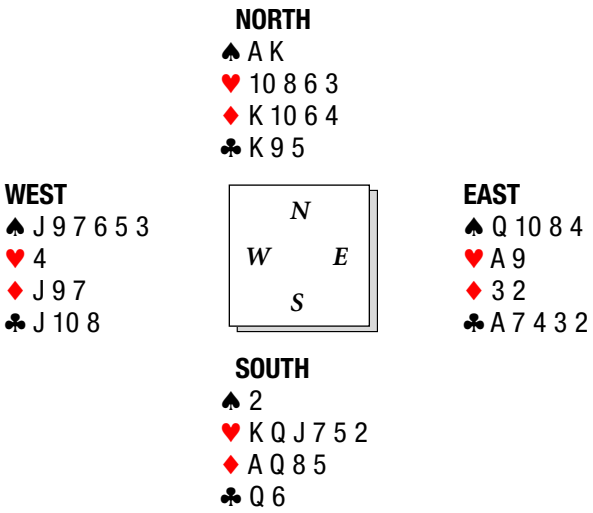
BLACKWOOD — WHO'S HE?

How do you feel about coming in second? Normally I'd regret it as the worst thing in the world — to have come within an inch of victory and fail at the last fence is altogether worse than having run the whole race in the middle of the field. But I recently played in a tournament that was so much fun that I almost didn't mind finishing second as a result of a catastrophe on the very last deal. The event was the annual Sun, Sea and Slams tournament in Barbados, where the climate is almost as warm as the welcome and the bridge just one of the many delights that the island has to offer. I was playing with the American international Neil Silverman, to whom I once finished second in the World Championships final. That really hurt! But I've forgiven him for that, though it may be a while before he forgives me for this. Both vulnerable on the last hand of the pairs tournament, playing against the only pair in the field who can overtake you for first place you pick up these cards:

♠ 2 ♥ K Q J 7 5 2 ♦ A Q 8 5 ♣ Q 6

I always enjoy holding good distributional hands, and my pleasure at the sight of this one was enhanced when my partner opened the bidding with 1♦. We were playing a five-card major system, so there was no guarantee of a great diamond fit, but I decided to force to game immediately with 2♥. Often you can actually save space in the later auction if you jump to show a good hand from the outset. Neil cheered me up still further by raising to 3♥, but with nothing to spare for my initial force to game, I contented myself with 4♥. Neil now made a cuebid of four spades, showing the ace. What would be your next call?

Well, if partner could proceed beyond game voluntarily, I felt that there ought to be a good chance of slam. I might have asked for aces with a Blackwood 4NT, but it is not good practice to do this with a club holding such as Q-x. Suppose partner showed two aces — I would still not know whether there were two club tricks to lose. I therefore, decided to make a return cuebid of 5♦, knowing that Neil would not go to slam unless he had some control of the club suit. Without further parley, my partner leapt to 6♥ — he had control of the club suit, all right, but that was not the problem, as the full deal shows:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Neil		*Zia*
	1♦	pass	2♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
pass	4♠	pass	5♦
pass	6♥	all pass	

East, Dave Blackman from Barbados, was too much of a gentleman to double — he had the mistaken idea that I might know what I was doing! But he wasn't too proud to take his aces and defeat me by a trick, nor did he seem noticeably upset when he and his partner, Tony Watkins, went up to collect the trophy instead of us. Still, if there had been a prize for the best comment in a post-mortem, my partner would have won it easily.

"You should have had at least one more ace," I had complained.

"You should have had at least one less pina colada," retorted Neil.

CENTER-HAND OPPONENT

Disasters have a painful habit of attacking like relentless piranhas with painful persistence. My most recent brush with tragedy came when I was partnered by a loquacious Australian. This character, well known for his wild bidding and the dubious ability to hold a glass of beer, a cigarette and thirteen cards in one hand, is one of the most feared opponents in the big game. The only trouble is that his partners fear him even more, and if you look at this hand, you will see why.

This deal resulted in the unusual score of minus 900, and your challenge is to attempt to deduce what auction could have lead to such a result. Of course, I'll give you a few clues, starting with the deal itself:

N-S Vul.

NORTH
♠ K 9 8 3 2
♥ 7 4
♦ 10
♣ A J 8 6 5

WEST
♠ A Q 7 4
♥ Q 9 3 2
♦ A
♣ 10 9 7 4

EAST
♠ 6 5
♥ A K J 10 8 6
♦ Q 7 4 3
♣ Q

SOUTH
♠ J 10
♥ 5
♦ K J 9 8 6 5 2
♣ K 3 2

The bidding started like this:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Australian		*Zia*
		1♥	pass
4♦[1]			

1. A splinter, showing diamond shortage and heart support.

For your last clue, the final contract was not doubled.

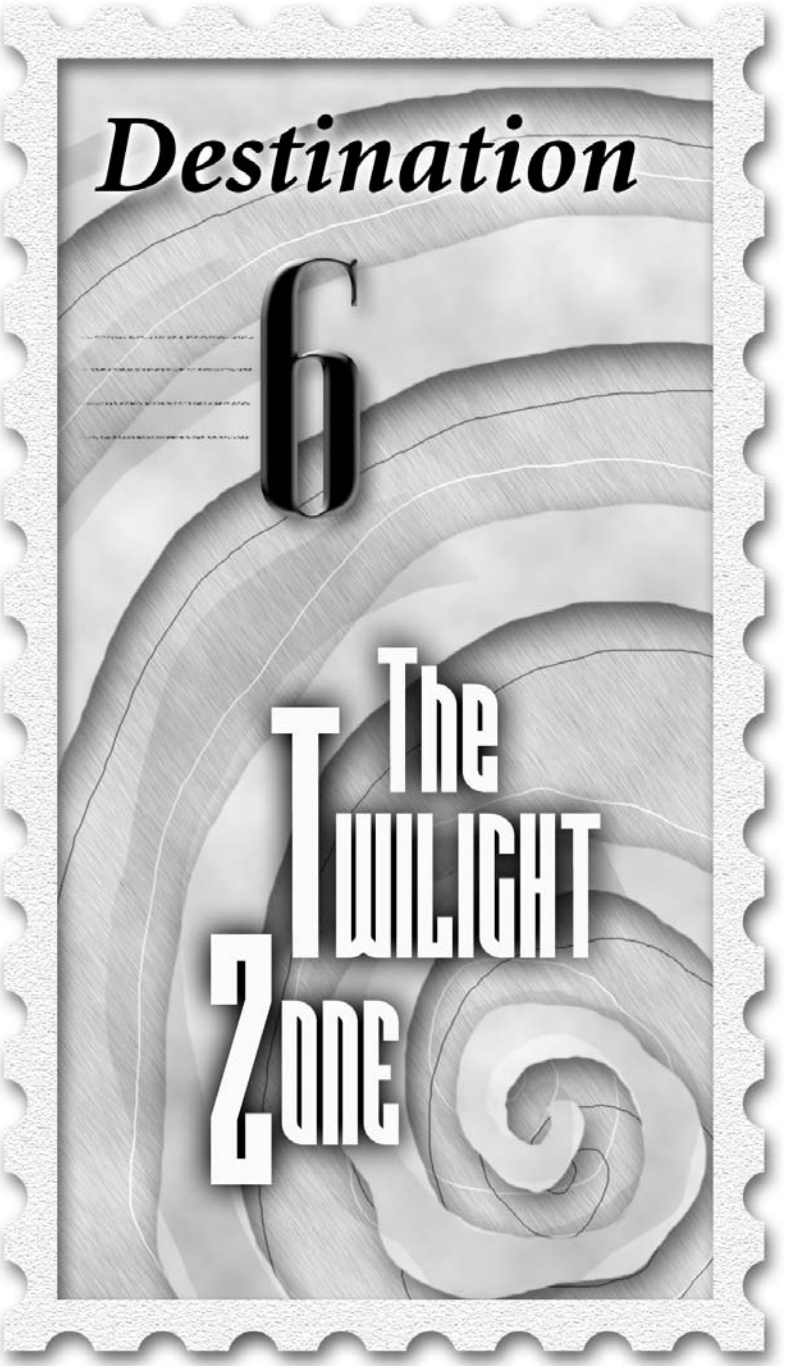
Confused? So was I, because when West bid four diamonds, my partner emerged with a double. Now, if you or I doubled an artificial bid, we would be showing length in the suit, suggesting a lead or a possible sacrifice to partner. But this North meant it as a takeout double, showing length in spades and clubs!

Why he would want to play in spades or clubs when we had no values and West, with short diamonds, probably had quite a few black cards, is a mystery to me. Besides, since he and West had one diamond each, and East a likely maximum of four since he had opened 1♥, was I not marked with great length in the diamond suit? In any case, when East bid 4♥, I decided that my seven-card support for what I foolishly believed to be partner's suit was worth a mention. "Five diamonds," I said confidently. "Double," said West, with

equal firmness — the difference being that his was justified. Until now I had no real idea that I was in the middle of a nightmare, but the horrible truth was just about to surface.

"Five hearts," said North, inviting me to choose another suit — at the five- or six-level, vulnerable against not! But East passed, and I decided that here was a chance to give my dear partner his choice of ways to commit suicide. I passed as well, expecting West to double and North to bid one of his confounded suits. But West, confident that he could beat five hearts a lot, decided to take the sure profit.

So it was that 5♥, by North — undoubled — became the final contract on this deal. I must admit that to his credit, my partner played the hand well, contriving an endplay on East which allowed him to escape for eight down. Yes, I know I said the score was minus 900. Despite the general hilarity, East and West did not overlook the 100 for honors!


Destination
6
The Twilight Zone

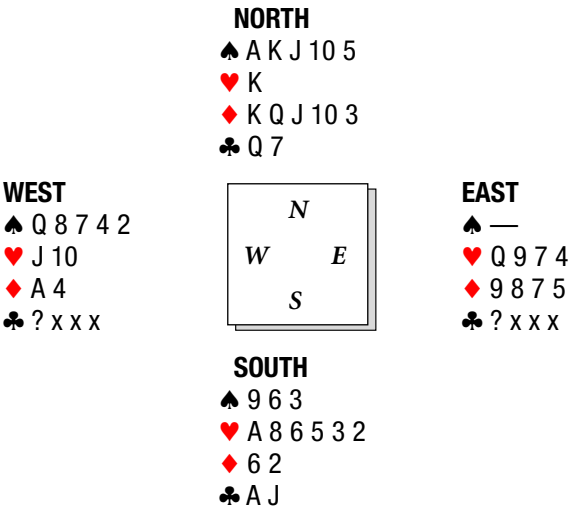
WORM ON A ROPE

A worm sits at the end of a rope that is one kilometer long. The worm sets out to crawl to the other end at a speed that will see him reach his goal in exactly one day. Alas for the worm, the rope is made out of rubber, and is gradually stretching, so that by the time the worm has crawled one kilometer, the rope is an extra one hundred meters long. By the time the worm has crawled the extra one hundred meters, the rope has added another ten meters, and so on. Assuming the worm lives forever and has a lot of patience, and

assuming that the the rope is infinitely elastic, will the worm ever reach the end of the rope?

Learning to play bridge is rather like being a worm on a rubber rope. Slowly you move forward as you gather knowledge, and although there is a great deal to assimilate, you believe that in time and with patience you will reach the goal eventually. But suddenly you discover that there is a new dimension to the game apart from those you have already studied, and the goal of perfection recedes rapidly into the distance. Patiently, you set out to master still more techniques, but just as you think you are making progress once again, there is a stretching sound and the ultimate goal moves ever further away.

If you have a holding in a particular suit of queen doubleton in dummy and ace-jack doubleton in your own hand, would you like the king to be placed on your right or on your left? Such a question will mean little or nothing to a beginner, but after you have been on the rubber rope for a while you will have learned about a technique called a 'finesse' and from then on you know that you can take an extra trick if the king is on your right, underneath the ace-jack. You may even learn to talk about the king being 'onside' — that is, favorably placed. But at the far end of the rope...

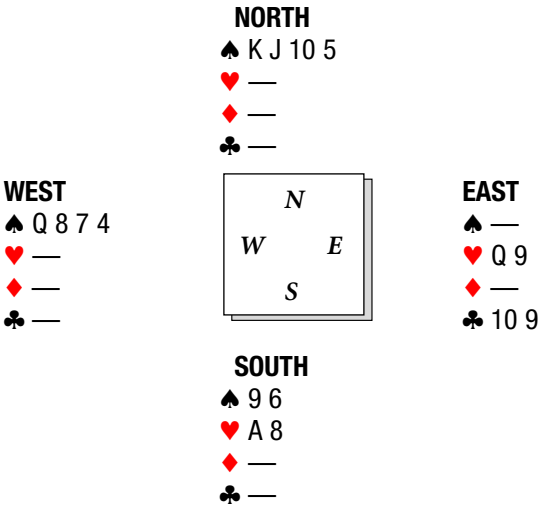


West leads the jack of hearts against your contract of six notrump, and you win the trick with dummy's king. You cash the

ace of spades, noting East's discard with dismay, and play a diamond honor from dummy. West takes the ace and returns a diamond. Where would you like the king of clubs to be?

If East has it, can you not take twelve tricks — two clubs, two hearts, four diamonds and four spades — by leading the nine from your hand? Try it and see — with the proviso that if you lead a small club from dummy, East will play the king, and if you lead the queen he will play small. That goes against every principle you have ever learned about the 'second hand plays low', or 'cover an honor with an honor' — but this is the far end of the rope, remember.

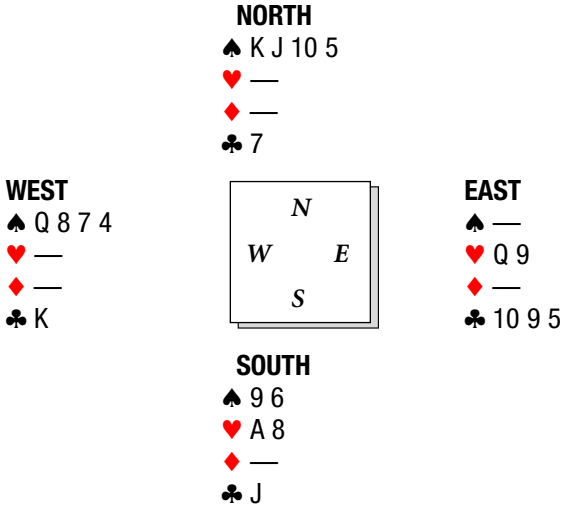
After you have wrestled with the problem for awhile, you will be forced to admit defeat, because you cannot discard safely from dummy on your ace of hearts. Suppose that you cash dummy's diamonds, then lead the queen of clubs (which holds) and another club to your ace. You have lost one trick, and the position is now:



If you lead the ♠9 (or the six) without first cashing the ♥A, West will cover and dummy will have a spade loser at the end. If you cash the ♥A, which of dummy's spades will you discard? The five is not good — you cannot finesse twice against West's queen, since East did not allow you two entries to your hand in clubs. And the jack or ten is not good either, for West will cover the nine and you will lose the last trick.

So, since you can't make the contract with the ♣K in the East

hand, you must hope that the king of clubs is 'onside' — in the West hand! Cash dummy's diamonds and lead the ♣Q to your ace, hoping that the position is now:



When you play the ♥A, West cannot discard a spade, for you will throw the club from dummy and lead the ♠9 to take the rest of the tricks in that suit. And when West discards the ♣K, you throw the small spade from dummy, play a spade to the ten, cross to the ♣J and finesse in spades once more.

This hand comes from perhaps the greatest book ever written on the play of the cards, *Adventures in Card Play*, by Géza Ottlik and Hugh Kelsey. If you found it difficult, do not despair. The worm in the puzzle will eventually make it to the end of the rope, and even if you never reach the stage where you can make contracts like the one above, there is a great deal of beauty and fascination to be found along the way.

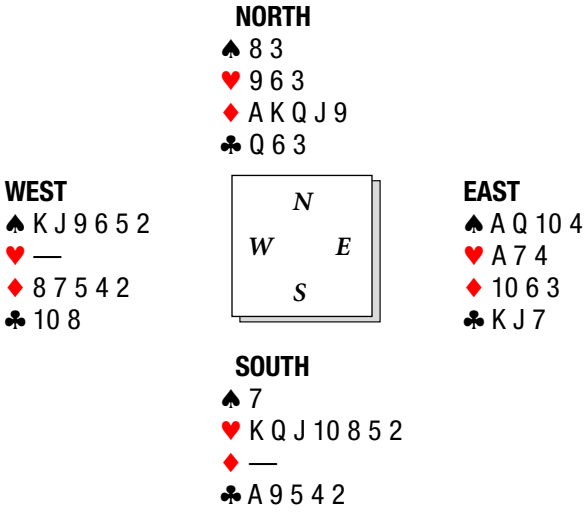
A DREAM OF GENIE

Three young bridge experts were walking along a beach the day before a major tournament when they came across a strangely-shaped bottle. As one of them picked it up and rubbed it with his sleeve, a genie flew out.

"My name," said this apparition, "is Zi Ham Chag — Master Genie of Bridge. I can grant you any wish you desire. If you are not satisfied with my gift, I will be forced to return to the bottle for another thousand years — but if you are, I will be free at last!"

Being typical bridge players, the three were more concerned about a fourth for a practice session than anything else. And if this genie were truly a master of the game, who knew what they might

learn? Seated by the water's edge, this hand was dealt:



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Genie	
3♠	pass	4♠	5♥
all pass			

West led the ♠2 against five hearts, and dummy followed with the ♠3. The genie, after considerable thought, played the ♠4!

As South won with the ♠7, West leapt to his feet. "That's enough — this genie is obviously an impostor!" he cried. South and North readily agreed, as it was obvious that anyone who allowed declarer to win so cheap a trick could not possibly be a Master Genie. Stuffing the protesting genie back into the bottle, they hurled it into the sea and continued with their promenade.

Later that evening, they showed the hand to the great analyst Michael Rosenberg, expecting him to chuckle with them over the genie's preposterous play. To their surprise, he studied the hand gravely for several minutes without saying a word. Finally, with tears in his eyes, he spoke:

"You have committed an unforgivable wrong. The problem on this hand is that South has plenty of tricks — but he cannot reach dummy unless the defenders allow him to do so. Thus, he will on

the face of it lose a spade, a heart and two clubs. But if East makes the normal play of winning the first spade and returning the suit (any switch allows declarer to reach dummy's winning diamonds), then South will ruff with the ♥10 and lead the ♥8 to dummy's nine. East must win with the ♥A — but this time, *any* card he returns will allow declarer an entry to dummy, and the losing clubs will all disappear on the solid diamond suit. Not at once, of course, for East can ruff the fourth round of diamonds — but South can overruff and return to dummy by playing the ♥2 to the ♥3 in order to cash the fifth diamond.

"But, amazingly, by allowing declarer to win the first spade with the seven in his hand, East avoids the throw-in. If South plays the ♥8 to the nine, East simply exits with the ♠10. South cannot discard on this, for West will overtake and play a club, and if South ruffs the ♠10 he can never reach dummy and must lose two club tricks at the finish.

"Of course," continued Rosenberg, "South ought to have played the ♠8 from the table at Trick 1. East cannot permit this card to hold, otherwise South can run the diamonds at once, and when he covers the ♠8 South can play as I described earlier.

"But when declarer committed the obvious blunder of playing low from dummy to the first trick, your genie found the most wonderful defense ever seen in the history of the game. And you idiots threw him back in the sea!"

(The hand above is shamelessly stolen from Géza Ottlik and Hugh Kelsey's wonderful book, *Adventures in Card Play*. If you found it difficult to follow, I'm sorry — but it is so beautiful that I could not resist using it.)

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Have you noticed how even the best players make really dumb mistakes? For apparently no good reason? The more I watch bridge around the world the more I come to the conclusion that everybody (even me) commits the most ridiculous blunders from time to time. But why? What happens to us that makes us go crazy for no apparent reason?

Here are a couple of hands from recent games. See what you think. Put yourself in the seat of the culprit. You hold:

♠ 3 ♥ 10 7 6 2 ♦ J 10 6 5 3 ♣ 10 7 2

Your hand is not too exciting, and because this is the last quarter, you are silently wondering which of your kibitzers you could ask to get you a brandy, when the bidding starts:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	Partner		*You*
3♠	dbl[1]	pass	4♦[2]
pass	5♠[3]	pass	6♦[4]
all pass			

1. Hold the brandy.
2. Trying to bid in an even tempo.
3. Oh my God, he's gone bananas.
4. Hoping the female kibitzers don't notice the stench of fear.

Now you really wish that you had that brandy as LHO leads the ♥8 and dummy comes down.

NORTH
♠ A
♥ A 9 3
♦ A K Q 4
♣ A K 8 6 3

SOUTH
♠ 3
♥ 10 7 6 2
♦ J 10 6 5 3
♣ 10 7 2

Not so bad, although it's a shame about the lead. But how do you play it (diamonds are 2-2)?

Easy! I'm sure it didn't take you too long to draw trumps, cash the ace of spades and play three rounds of clubs, hoping for LHO to have three clubs and a singleton heart. Well done, and you make the hand.

But when a top, and I do mean really excellent player, played this hand, he went down. Why? Well, to be fair, I haven't told you that the previous hand had been a contract of 7NT, bid almost perfectly but for the fact that there were only twelve top tricks, the thirteenth

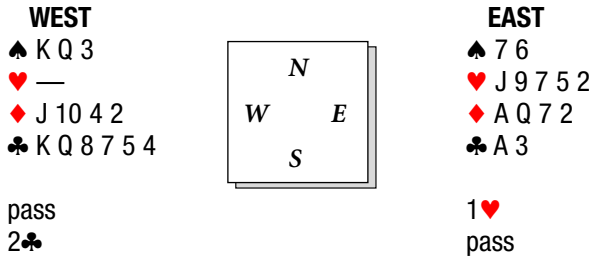
needing to come from a guess or a complicated line of play. The player in question spent a long time and even more effort in making the hand — that was the good news. The bad news was that he was still 'high' on the elation and couldn't drive himself 'down' to concentrate on a relatively simple hand.

Conclusion: previous hands/occurrences have an enormous effect on later ones.

Remedy: install an imaginary switch in your mind and turn it on when you need to bring yourself back to reality.

How: how the hell do I know? I'm not a doctor.

If you think that the last example only brought you closer to your psychiatrist, try this one, which I call 'The Twilight Zone Syndrome'. In our high-stakes New York IMP game, a lot depends on whom you cut as teammates. Literally thousands of dollars hang on whom you have in the other room. So, the other day when the opponents bid these hands:



I was already counting my winnings because our pair in the other room were not only experts, but well known for their aggressive style — no way they would end up in only two clubs.

When the time came for comparison and they sheepishly said "Minus 1400" (a loss of fourteen IMPs instead of a pickup of ten IMPs if they had gone plus 600), I asked the perpetrator (as politely as I could with my hands on his throat) what had happened.

West opened 1♣ (okay), North bid 1♠ and East bid 2♥ (good!). South passed and West rebid 3♣. North passed, East bid 3♦ (great) South passed, and now West inexplicably bid 3NT. You would think that a top-class player might feel that four-card trump support and an undisclosed void in addition to a main suit with as many holes as the late Berlin Wall were sufficient to raise partner. But some unknown force made him bid 3NT.

Unlucky, crazy, something out of the Twilight Zone? I don't know, but wait, here comes RHO to the rescue — double! Thank you, Lord! Now that heart void looks even less solid a stopper than before, those 'running' clubs look like they need a wheelchair, and that ruffing value does mildly suggest a suit contract.

But what does our hero do? Pass! Secure with his balanced distribution and John Wayne mentality ("You can't chase *me* out of town"...).

Meanwhile, the goddess of bridge, amused by the episode, benignly allows North to lead a spade, revealing dummy's undeserved goodies, especially the ♣A — a treasure. The spade queen wins the first trick, and now (with clubs breaking) West has eight tricks. "Cash them!" we scream silently.

But the Twilight Zone Syndrome is too strong, that familiar music is still ringing and our hero is now greedily thinking, "If I cash my six club tricks and then play a diamond, LHO would never cover when he has the king, having counted my tricks; but if I play the jack of diamonds before the clubs, he will have to cover with the king. If he doesn't, I can always go up ace and cash out."

Brilliant thinking, you say, and accurate too, except in the T.Z. So, out comes the ♦J, deuce from LHO and... declarer runs it!

Don't ask me how he did it or why he did it. In fact, don't remind me of this hand or the 1400 or the Twilight Zone (dee dee didi, dee dee didi).

Remedy: commit suicide, and quickly before your teammates murder you.

SOFTLY, SOFTLY

What if there were a movie about the bridge scene? Casting would be easy — Omar Sharif in the leading role, perhaps Jodie Foster, a combination of beauty and brains, as the intellectual heroine. But who would you choose to direct it? For a clue there, we need only look at the bridge column of any newspaper and notice the language that it uses. Squeezes are always 'inexorable', entries are always 'carefully preserved', a 4-1 trump break is always 'bad news'. Anything above a ten is never discarded but 'spectacularly jettisoned'. Gory images are all-pervading — one doesn't just double, one 'wields the axe', and an 1100 penalty is invariably a 'massacre' or a 'bloodbath'. 'Distributional storms' and 'rock-crushers' abound — I sometimes feel that the average bridge column could be turned into a Quentin Tarrantino script with very little effort.

But there is a calm, tranquil side to bridge as well as a violent one, and the successful players are often those who can bring controlled logic to bear. Playing with good friends after a good supper

in front of a log fire, you discover the following gem:

NORTH
♠ A J 8 7 2
♥ J 4
♦ A K 10
♣ 6 4 3

SOUTH
♠ —
♥ A 9 2
♦ Q J 9 8 3
♣ A Q J 10 9

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			You
	1♠	pass	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	6♦
all pass			

West leads the ♣8 against your small slam. How would you play?

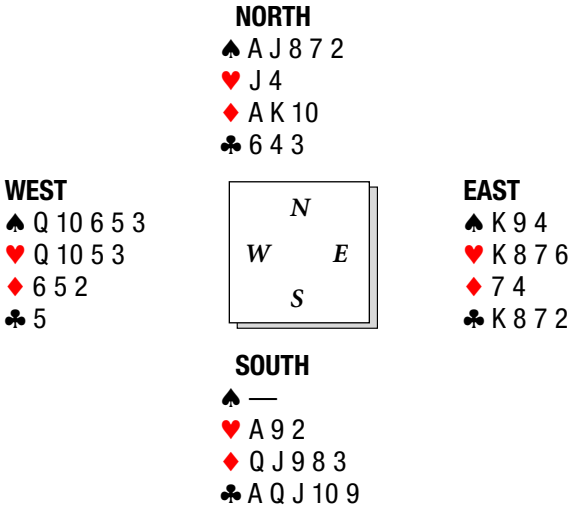
You have five diamond tricks, you can establish four clubs by knocking out the king, and you have two major-suit aces for a total of eleven tricks. Your first thought might be that since West's lead marks the ♣K with East, you can collect five club tricks by finessing — but look again.

If West has led a singleton club, you may run short of entries to take the finesse against East twice. Suppose you win the lead with the ♣9, draw three rounds of trumps ending in dummy, throw a heart on the ♠A and take a club finesse. It will win, but West will show out and you will have no way back to dummy for another finesse. One down. So, how would you play?

Well, what about playing two rounds of trumps — the queen and the king, say — before taking a club finesse? West, if he began

with three trumps, will ruff this trick and you will simply finish a trick short since one of your sure winners has been ruffed. Of course, you will make the contract this way if West cannot ruff the second round of clubs — either because he has more than one club or fewer than three diamonds — but do you have to rely on this slim chance?

Wait a moment. What about drawing just one round of trumps — crossing to dummy in the process — before taking a second club finesse? West will ruff, but you will later be able to re-enter dummy in trumps, repeat the club finesse, discard dummy's losing heart on the fourth round of clubs and ruff a heart in dummy for your twelfth trick.



This line will succeed if West has one, two, or three diamonds together with his singleton club, and clearly represents your best chance. A peaceful finesse, but timed to perfection. Not inexorable, not spectacular, not violent — but neat. Very neat.

THE BRIDGE OSCARS

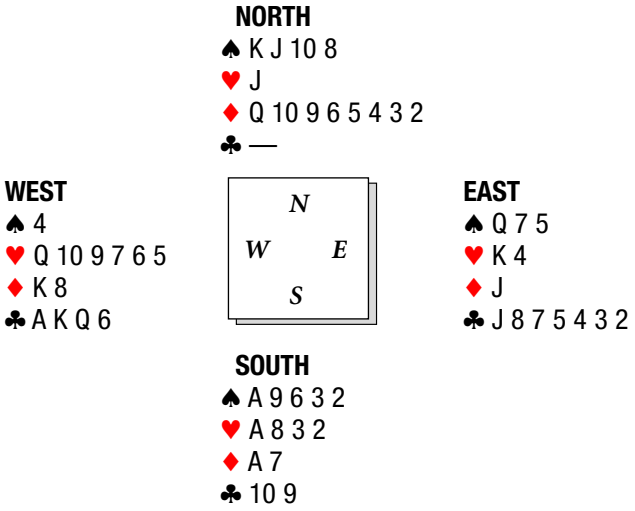
A question often asked but seldom answered is: who is (or was) the world's greatest bridge player? The partnership element of the game does not easily permit one player to stand above the rest, as in tennis or chess. Instead, there are great pairs — Hamman and Wolff, Belladonna and Garozzo, Reese and Schapiro — and great teams such as the Dallas Aces or the Blue Team.

So many different and often incompatible skills make up the great players that it is impossible for one individual to master them

all. A great technician, for instance, is rarely a great psychologist. Players with immense powers of concentration do not possess great table presence or flair.

Rather than nominating a single individual for the title of the world's greatest player, I present here my awards — bridge Oscars, if you like — for the masters of each unique talent.

For genius — Benito Garozzo. Perhaps the most naturally gifted player of all time — volatile, emotional and blessed with a God-given feel for what is happening at the table. Look at this hand, played against two of his Italian countrymen. Benito was South, Giorgio Belladonna North:



West had doubled Garozzo's opening bid of 1♠, and as a result of some exuberant bidding by Belladonna, Garozzo had to play the hand in 6♠ on the lead of the ♣A.

Almost without pause for thought, Benito ruffed the lead in dummy and ran the ♠J! When this held the trick, he played a diamond to the ace and a second diamond to West's king. West did his best by returning a second club to force dummy to ruff again, but Garozzo simply started to run dummy's diamond suit. West could not ruff, and as soon as East did Garozzo would overruff and return to the ♠K for the rest of the diamonds.

For technique — Terence Reese. At the table, you might have compared Reese to a machine. A computer before computers were

invented, he was capable of the most intricate analysis and deduction. So great were his powers of concentration, it is said, that one time when his friends introduced a scantily-clad model into the card room, Reese remained unaware of her presence because he was declarer at the time.

For competitiveness — Rixi Markus. There is a quality that separates a player from a winner, a spirit that never surrenders. Rixi was the epitome of this quality. Regardless of the level of competition, she did not know how to give less than her best.

For temperament — Bob Hamman. Most players know only too well how a bad result can affect future performance for the worse. Human reaction to error or misfortune is hard to overcome. Somehow Hamman, the lovable Texan with a string of successes, seems to have found the answer. His ability to remain unperturbed in the face of disaster has made him the highest-ranked player in the world.

For magic — Giorgio Belladonna. Charismatic, larger than life, Belladonna belonged among those whose dazzling plays could at times defy belief. They went against all accepted principles — but they worked. See if you can match his flair on this deal, where your hand is:

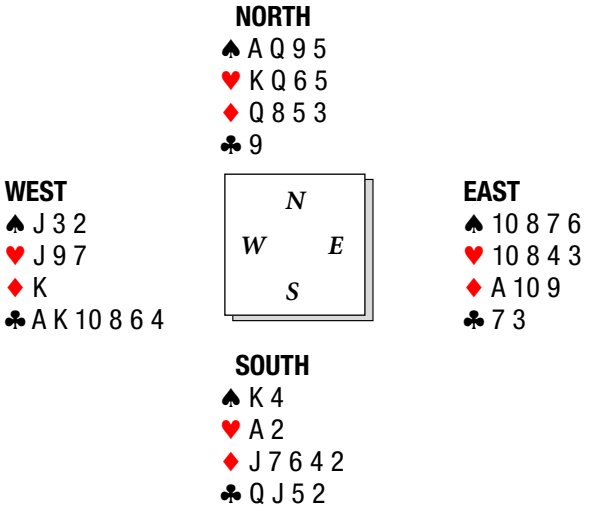
♠ J 3 2 ♥ J 9 7 ♦ K ♣ A K 10 8 6 4

You are sitting West and playing the Precision system used by the mighty Squadra Azzura, winners of more world titles than any team before or since. Your opening bid is 2♣, showing a good club suit in a hand of opening strength, and the bidding proceeds:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♣	dbl	pass	3NT
all pass			

North's double is for takeout, and South's jump to 3NT indicates that he has the club suit well held — or believes that he has. What would be your opening lead?

There is no particular reason not to lead a club, and most mortals would begin either with the ♣A or the fourth-highest ♣8. Belladonna chose neither of those cards, selecting instead the ♣10! See what happened:



If Belladonna had led a lower club than the ten, North's ♣9 would have held the first trick. Declarer would have been able to establish the necessary tricks in diamonds without allowing Belladonna to set up and cash his clubs.

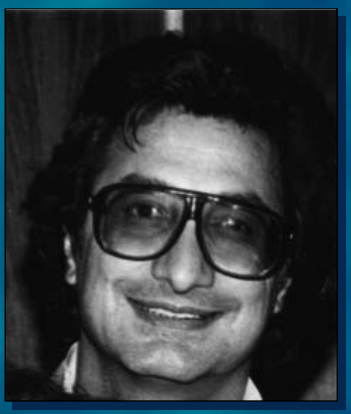
If Belladonna had led a higher club than the ten, declarer would once again have been in control since East would have had no club to return on gaining the lead with the ♦A.

But on the lead of the ten of clubs itself, declarer could do nothing. If South won the first trick, East would be able to return a club through South's ♣Q52 to West's ♣AK864. If South ducked the first trick, Belladonna would play three more rounds of clubs and wait to obtain the lead with the ♦K.

Magic indeed — Houdini could not have done better.

GENERAL INTEREST

Taking you from world championship tournaments to big-money rubber bridge games, this book puts you at the table as thousands of dollars (or a world title) change hands on the turn of a card. In the smoke-filled rooms of London and New York, characters such as Harry the Horse, Moonbeam, Godzilla, and Hannibal the Cannibal play for high stakes. World Championships hang in the balance in Chile, Italy, and Bali. In the jet-set resorts of Europe the top pros play invitational money tournaments with millionaire sponsors. Share the favorite bridge memories of one of the world's best, as Zia Mahmood takes you *Around the World in 80 Hands*.



ZIA MAHMOOD is arguably the most recognizable bridge player of our times. Born in Pakistan, he has homes in London and New York, and now represents the USA in international competition. His tournament successes include numerous North American championships, and a world championship silver medal. He writes a regular bridge column in *The Guardian*, and his previous books include a best-selling autobiography, *Bridge My Way*.

DAVID BURN is a systems programmer, bridge journalist, and international team coach. He lives in London, England.

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