

Contract Bridge

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CONTRACT BRIDGE

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By Steve Becker

BASIC CARD-READING

West dealer.

North-South vulnerable.

NORTH

♠ A 9 7 4 2

♥ Q J 9

♦ Q 8

♣ J 6 2

WEST

♠ 5

♥ 10 8 6

♦ 10 7 3

♣ A K Q 10 8 3

EAST

♠ K 6

♥ K 5 3

♦ J 9 6 5 4 2

♣ 9 4

SOUTH

♠ Q J 10 8 3

♥ A 7 4 2

♦ A K

♣ 7 5

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
3 ♣	Pass	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠		

Opening lead — king of clubs.

The aim of an elimination play is to compel a defender -- when he is given the lead late in the play -- to make a return that costs his side a trick. Take this case where South is in four spades and West leads the K-Q-A of clubs, declarer ruffing the third club.

South leads the trump queen on which West plays the five. It would be wrong to finesse, considering West's three-club bid, because West would have opened one club, not three, had

he held the guarded king of spades and A-K-Q-10-8-3 of clubs.

So South goes up with the ace, hoping either to catch the singleton king or develop an endplay against East later on. After East follows low to the ace, South cashes the A-K of diamonds, eliminating that suit, and then leads a trump to put East on lead.

East is now endplayed. If he returns a diamond, South ruffs it in his hand, discarding the heart nine from dummy. A subsequent heart finesse brings home the contract. If East instead returns a heart at trick eight, South follows low, winning West's ten with dummy's jack, and takes a second heart finesse to make the contract.

Note that if South takes the trump finesse at trick four, he goes down one. East wins with the king and returns a trump, and East-West score a heart trick eventually, assuming they defend correctly.

Oddly enough, the contract can be defeated if East makes the extraordinary play of ruffing his partner's ace of clubs with the king of spades at trick three and returns a trump or a diamond. Declarer is helpless against this defense.

It just goes to show that it sometimes pays to trump partner's ace. The trick is to know when to do it.

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