

Contract Bridge

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CONTRACT BRIDGE

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By Steve Becker

CLUB PLAY SAVES THE DAY

West dealer.

North-South vulnerable.

NORTH

♠ 8 3
♥ A 7
♦ Q 10 5 2
♣ Q J 8 6 3

WEST

♠ K J 10 9 4 2
♥ 9 5 3
♦ A 7
♣ A 9

EAST

♠ 7 6
♥ J 10 6 4
♦ 8 6 3
♣ 10 5 4 2

SOUTH

♠ A Q 5
♥ K Q 8 2
♦ K J 9 4
♣ K 7

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dble
2 ♠	3 ♣	Pass	3 NT

Opening lead — jack of spades.

A competent declarer can often make order out of chaos in much the same way a jigsaw-puzzle fan can join together many hundreds of pieces.

Consider this deal where correct play enables South to make three notrump, but where, if he strays even slightly from the straight and narrow, he will fail in his mission.

Against three notrump, West leads the jack of spades, taken by declarer with the queen. Observing that he

needs to score four tricks in the minor suits, South might be tempted to play the king of clubs next. If he does this, he eventually goes down two. West takes the ace and plays another spade, and South is undone whatever he does.

Alternatively, if South leads a diamond at trick two, he also fails. West rises with the ace and returns a spade, and there is no way for South to score more than eight tricks.

But if South leads a low club at trick two, as he should, he makes the contract. What can West do? If he plays the ace, South has nine tricks -- four clubs, three hearts and two spades. And if West ducks instead, dummy's jack wins, and declarer then drives out the ace of diamonds to produce nine tricks — a club, three diamonds, three hearts and two spades.

How does declarer know that a low club at trick two is the right play? The answer is not difficult. He simply assumes that West must have both missing aces for his opening bid.

Once South makes that assumption, he can see that leading a low club at trick two will virtually assure him of developing nine tricks before West can develop five. In effect, West's hand is an open book, and all South has to do is to take advantage of what is written there.

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