

## Not the best play

This deal provides us with a great example of how not to play bridge. You may learn quite a bit from it nevertheless. The North in this deal was not a novice at the game though he had been known to acknowledge in a self deprecating manner that he was 'not the best bridge player to grace the club's premises'.

Board 4 Dealer N Nil Vul

♠ AQ5	
♥ Q2	
♦ KJ98	
♣ K863	
♠ J	♠ 108743
♥ AK4	♥ 9763
♦ 10542	♦ AQ76
♣ AJ1074	♣
♠ K962	
♥ J1085	
♦ 3	
♣ Q952	

North opened 1C. This bid was perfect because NS were playing Acol with a 12-14 INT. South responded 1H. Correct again. North now bid 1NT. Absolute perfection in the bidding so far. The 1NT rebid showed 15-16 HCP. South did not like her singleton diamond, and with a known club fit, bid 2C, a sound enough decision though passing 1NT might have been the better option at the match point game. But when North next leapt to 3NT poor South was beginning to regret NOT passing 1NT. Things went from bad to worse. East led the four of spades and it was North's turn to try and be equally bad with the declarer play. This he certainly succeeded in! He called for the NINE from dummy. This play was only going to work if East had both the jack and the ten and playing low (remember, 'second hand low' is the NORMAL rule) would have been much better. West played his singleton jack and declarer won the queen. He then had another bad idea: he decided to take his ace as well! You may have heard the "Confucius" saying but if not, let me repeat it the way we knew it:

*"Confucius say: two people lead same suit, one of them crazy".*

Anyway, North had done just what East was wanting him to do. When West showed out, declarer turned his attention to the clubs. A low club and East showed out. Declarer could see things weren't going to work out too well, and decided to put in dummy's nine, which lost to the ten. West knew what to do, 'lead through *strength* and round to *weakness*', that being a diamond. Declarer's queen lost to East's king and East now cleared the spades, leading the eight to force the king. Poor declarer now realised that he had wasted the nine by being either wrong or greedy to have put it up at the first trick. Declarer now reverted to clubs but West won the ace and shot back a second diamond. Declarer continued to guess badly (that went perfectly with the rest of his play didn't it?) and put up the king, East winning the ace. Two spade tricks followed by East, who silently thanked declarer for helping him set them up. West kept the two top hearts and ten of diamonds for three more tricks, which added up to down FIVE.

Let me now show you the full hands again and we can go through a somewhat better line of play, this time in a sensible ONE NO TRUMP.

♠ AQ5

♥ Q2

♦ KJ98

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♥ AK4

♦ 10542

♣ AJ1074

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♥ 9763

♦ AQ76

♣

♠ K962

♥ J1085

♦ 3

♣ Q952

East leads the four of spades. *Hint: most players will play HIGH as third player, so the jack or ten will almost certainly come out from West.* Low from dummy, jack from West and queen from declarer. Now, declarer plays on the suit with the best longer term prospects, and that is HEARTS because after losing two heart tricks declarer may have two good ones. The club suit also has potential but can wait, because both spades and diamonds are well stopped for the time being.

The queen of hearts loses to West and West must switch, to the obvious low diamond. Declarer puts in the eight and East wins the queen. *Tip: watch carefully what cards the defenders play and whenever possible finesse.*

East continues with a second spade, which runs to declarer's ace, West discarding a low club. The spade finesse to the nine is now marked. A second heart to dummy's ten is won by West and West leads another diamond. Declarer finesses again, putting in the nine, remembering that the eight had lost to East's QUEEN earlier. East wins the ace and can do nothing that will harm declarer. If East leads a spade, the nine is played, if East leads a heart, declarer can put in the eight and finesse, or rise with the jack and hope the suit breaks. In the latter case, when declarer wins the jack, he can then cash the good spade in dummy and play on clubs, and will still come to seven easy tricks: four spade tricks, one or two clubs, one heart, and one or two diamonds because West will be end played in clubs or diamonds. The most tricks that EW can make in the sequence I have given you are just six tricks. Work it out for yourself. One declarer actually made 2NT for a clear top, but many others failed to make even 1NT. 2C is not a bad spot but is bound to fail, though by just one trick, still scoring well over 50% on the board.

Isn't it interesting how simple bidding to a simple contract, played in an intelligent way, can create an 80% score on a very simple hand. When you learn to turn such simple hands into high percentage results simply by doing the simple things properly, you'll be surprised how much your bridge will improve. You will then be able to look towards a 60% rather than a 50% score for the session.