

Chapter 13

A RISKY DOUBLE

DLR N NIL VUL

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

Willy Riskett is one of our newer and brighter sparks in the club. Unfortunately, I was on the receiving end of this one. Foolishly, I had agreed to play this stupid thing called “Tartan Twos”, something I thought had gone out with the ark. Al Grunt, North, passed, and Ally Newman, the exponent of the Tartan, opened 2H. Willy Riskett DOUBLED, and I bid 4H. That didn’t stop Al Grunt from bidding 4S and I was beginning to lick my lips when Willy bid 5D. That was most unfortunate, but my mouth was to water yet again when Al decided that this had to be a cue bid, and bid 5H as a return ‘cue’. Willy bid 6D and things had gone too far as far as I was concerned. I doubled. Al, thinking that his redouble would be showing second round diamond control, REDOUBLED. Willy passed, and I started to look forward to a big score. Maybe Ally even had diamonds as her second suit! And if not, they certainly weren’t making when they only had one playable suit between them!

So, there we were, 6D REDOUBLED by South, Willy Riskett. Ho ho, I chuckled to myself, and led the club six, bound to be Ally’s second suit.

Willy played low from dummy and ruffed when Ally produced the eight. He then laid down the queen of spades and I suddenly saw the danger of dummy’s trumps. Winning the ace, I quickly shifted to a trump, but too late! Willy was able to ruff two hearts and dispose of the third one on the king of spades.

“Sorry, Ally,” I was full of apologies, “that should have been a top for us. The fact is, they blundered into a ridiculous slam through not knowing what they were doing.” I pointedly cast a glance at Al, then at Willy before continuing. “I should have know to lead a trump. It really was quite obvious, it was sheer greed and complacency that persuaded me to lead a club, since I knew they were all at sea and I expected they’d be down at least three on ANY lead. A trump lead is a standout on PROPER bidding, and there’s no play for it THEN.”

“DOUBLE!” I heard Willy say.

“What do you man, DOUBLE”

“You know, the backgammon cube you guys use in tournaments. I’d like to double you to say I can make it on a trump lead also.”

“Oh, the cube, SURE. In that case, what’s your bet? \$20 shall we say, and I’ll REDOUBLE”. Maybe I was a bit precipitate and should have looked at the hands, but this one seemed to be a sure thing.

“That will make it \$80 then, Count. Might I now have the temerity to suggest that if you lead a trump, I proceed as follows?”

(hands repeated for convenience)

Dir N NIL VUL

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

Willy continued: "I win the trump in dummy and ruff a club. I then play the jack of hearts, you cover, and I ruff in dummy. I now ruff another club and lead the ten of hearts, ruffing out your KING next. I then ruff a club, high, back to hand, draw your second trump, and when I lead the king of spades, this is the position":

He quickly scribbled the hands down on my systems card, to add insult to injury.

Dir N NIL VUL

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

"When I play the king of spades, what do you do? You can WIN and what THEN? You can either finesse Ally by leading a heart, or you can lead a spade and let me discard my heart loser on the queen of spades. Or, you could graciously decline to win your ace of spades and let Ally take a trick instead, being the gentleman and Count that you are. Gentleman and SCHOLAR, you are not, or you might have LEARNED to think before you double!

Chapter 14

THE NITPICKER'S GUIDE TO BRIDGE HANDS

You will have no doubt from time to time read a bridge book or article which seems to have been based on hindsight rather than a logical analysis of the situation. At other times the hand or analysis is, in simple terms, just plain wrong. I know that when I produce this collection of critical analyses of pre reported hands, the reader, or more likely the writer, if they have any recollection of doing the writing, will call me a nitpicker. That is why I have done the bridge thing and preempted them by titling these chapters as I have. Yes, I will be nitpicking as well as hitting the writers with sledgehammers, so expect the worst. If you can manage to put up with the continual criticism, you never know, you actually may learn something of value.

Let's start with an anonymous bridge club's 'house' magazine, normally a great little publication. Here is your first problem:

Declarer

♠ A Q 10 5 4 3

♥

♦ 7 6 2

♣ A Q 3

Dummy

♠ K 9

♥ K 7 6 5

♦ 3

♣ K J 10 7 4 2

This is how the story went:

"Two questions:

1. Declarer has bid to 4S. West leads the eight of diamonds. How do you play to ensure the contract?
2. Dummy raises you to 6S (ouch!). Same lead. What is your best play?"

Talk about inadequate information. I can't even attempt to answer the first question, easy as it may seem. Clearly I am being asked to make my contract ten times out of ten, but don't the defenders have any say in matters? With the eight of diamonds having been led, I don't even get the chance to ensure anything because I still have to wait for either West or East to make the next lead.

The obvious answer would seem to be to lose the first spade trick, either by finessing to the nine, or leading the nine and running it. That way, even if the defence leads another diamond, the contract is safe because dummy can ruff with the king and the rest of the trumps can be drawn with the ace, queen and ten.

But for declarer to have that choice of play, the most likely scenario is that East has allowed West to hold the lead, therefore it must be 'Fourth Highest' and E-W must have bid diamonds for East to be sure of this. Since West has been allowed to hold the lead, West must have worked out to switch to hearts, and thus declarer can have the opportunity to "ensure the contract." Therefore, king of hearts from dummy, ace from East, ruff from declarer, and now a spade to the nine ensures the contract.

Now let's look at the conditions of play, and also at the opposition. If the conditions are that we're playing Match Point pairs, the finesse against the jack of spades is inviting a lousy score. Why? Because it succeeds only when there is a 4-1 break in the suit with jack to four in either hand. Whenever the jack falls in one, two or three rounds, there are twelve easy tricks there for the taking.

And what about the opposition? Have you noted that if indeed there is a bad break in the trump suit, all any intelligent defender has to do is take the first diamond trick and continue diamonds. This will force dummy to ruff with the nine and declarer cannot take any spade finesses, even if he is one of those people who seem to have X-ray vision or be able to see round corners. Then, the moment declarer loses the lead to the jack of trumps, the defence can take whatever diamonds they have available. This is an even more obvious defence when East is defending Six Spades. As long as dummy is forced to ruff, there is no play to make 6S if either defender holds four spades to the jack, irrespective of any super powers that declarer may have. What are the chances of making 6S? Whatever it takes to bring down the jack of trumps, and that should be at least 80% I would have thought. Yet, we have another quite gross blunder by our esteemed writer of the article. He/he suggests that, "against 6S, however, you have to finesse through East". That can be based not only seeing all four hands but also on the expectation that the defenders are hopeless. But if you figure that

the defence knows what they are doing, then you can claim at trick two if they have not led another diamond, since the spades will run!

Let's look at all four hands now and see what else of interest we can find:

♠ 6 ♥ J 8 4 2 ♦ K J 9 8 5 ♣ 9 8 5	♠ K 9 ♥ K 7 6 5 ♦ 3 ♣ K J 10 7 4 2	♠ J 8 7 2 ♥ A Q 10 9 3 ♦ A Q 10 ♣ 6	♠ A Q 10 5 4 3 ♥ ♦ 7 6 4 2 ♣ A Q 3
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If the defenders lead two rounds of diamonds, forcing dummy to ruff, and the king is cashed then trumps drawn, the defence make two more diamond tricks. That is, as long as East has the sense to win the ace and continue the queen, and West the sense to overtake East's ten to cash another diamond.

So, Four Spades cannot make for N-S. But . . . do you notice that Four Hearts makes for E-W? In fact 5H would make were it not for the 4-0 heart break and the possibility of a diamond ruff, since as long as declarer can ruff one spade then pick up North's king of hearts, they have eleven tricks. So, E-W must surely have been doing some bidding.

Now if declarer does have the super powers and can see round corners, thus knowing that the second round spade finesse is the 'obvious right play', then North can make Six Clubs. A far superior contract to 6S. There is, however, one possible trap, and an interesting one at that. If East cashes the ace of diamonds and switches to a spade, declarer must not win the nine when it runs round, but rather 'waste' the king. Why? Because otherwise the spades are blocked if trumps are drawn, and cannot be unblocked before that without getting one ruffed. So, win with the king and then finesse by leading the nine to the ten after trumps are drawn.

But imagine if E-W are so clever as to switch to a spade when East has three small and West the doubleton jack which he refuses to play when West switches. Now that would be a great little story. Just imagine Rueful Rabbit as West, the Hideous Hog as East and Papa Papadopolous as North. The Hog switches to a spade and the Rabbit refuses to play the jack because he's lost it among his clubs. Then he finds it again when the nine is played to the ten. Victor Mollo would have been proud of that one!

Here is another that I have entitled "What Now?"

Dummy

♠ Q 9 8 5
 ♥ K J
 ♦ A 5 2
 ♣ K J 10 8

You

♠ A K
 ♥ Q 10 3
 ♦ K Q 3
 ♣ 7 6 4 3 2

All Vul, Dealer South

S	W	N	E
1NT	NB	2C	NB
2H	NB	3NT	NB
4S	End		

How do you defend when your partner leads a low trump?

This was, purportedly, originally written up by the great Terence Reese.

To quote the given solution: “Declarer has at least 12 points, dummy has 14 and you have 14. Partner has nothing! How about shape? South has shown four cards in each major suit. So he must be 3-2 in the minors. Could he have 3 clubs? Surely with a singleton club, 3 trumps and a worthless hand West would have led his club, therefore South has 3 diamonds and 2 clubs. So is there any hope? There might be if West has the D10. Switch to the D3. If South tries the D9, West’s D10 will force the ace in dummy and West can ruff declarer’s clubs if he tries to discard diamonds.”

The analysis of the point count and distribution cannot be faulted. However, the suggested defence by East must surely be on the assumption that it is Teams/IMPs and that it is imperative that every chance be taken to defeat the contract. Too many of the ‘in house’ publications of bridge clubs fail to appreciate that there is a HUGE difference between the play in a Match Point game and at Teams scoring.

But back to the problem and why the switch to the diamond THREE if asking for trouble, even at TEAMS play. You see, if declarer has got the jack and ten, or does not have the ten or nine and therefore goes up with the jack, or even if declarer has the nine and goes up with the jack anyway, East has just thrown away an overtrick and possibly close to 100% of the available match points if that is the game being played.

There can be no doubt that East must switch to a diamond, but does it have to be the risky three? The king may give declarer a clue as to the whereabouts of the queen, but the QUEEN is less likely to do so in relation to the king. And in any case, is declarer not likely to play the clubs anyway and try for a diamond discard, or even two diamond discards?

Furthermore, if East switches to the QUEEN, he will get a clue as to declarer’s holding in the suit. With J 9 8, as has been suggested, declarer will follow with the eight and East can still try the three later. But even more to the point, if East leads the queen, a good declarer, holding J 9 x, will duck that and await East’s next diamond lead. Now if East is smart and brave enough, East can lead the three and be confident of success against a good declarer.

Now, for the comment that West must have a “worthless” hand. “Pointless”, perhaps, but not necessarily worthless. Yes, West would have led a singleton club, but to hope that West has four diamonds to the ten is surely insulting West and contradicting the statement about his worthless hand. That holding does not make West’s hand worthless at all, and if West does lead from their best suit and leads the Four of Diamonds, the contract will be defeated for sure. East can win the king at trick one (declarer has to duck a diamond lead) and shoot back the three and now declarer will surely fall into the trap. Normally of course East would play the queen, but since East knows that West has nothing apart from the ten, there is no point in telling declarer that you might have the king-queen.

But hold on! On a diamond lead from West, is there not a certain way to defeat the contract without having to resort to the legerdemain of underleading your second diamond honour?

Let’s now look at all the hands before we decide:

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

If you ask me, that spade lead is just terrible. There’s no chance of cutting down any ruffing power and little chance that the hand will be played on a cross ruff. There is a better chance that you’ll pick up the queen in partner’s hand when declarer may have finessed. The doubleton club is equally a waste of time and could also pick up a vital honour card in East’s hand, and a heart round to declarer’s second (and FIRST BID) suit cannot be correct.

What's wrong with leading your best and longest suit and one with an honour? West doesn't even have a genuine Yarborough. So, West leads the Four of Diamonds and East can be sure that West has four diamonds to the ten or West would not have led the four. Therefore the rest of both West's and declarer's hand is an open book to East. Seeing all four hands, how should East defend? The clever ploy of the king of diamonds followed by the three will almost certainly work, but is there not something even better?

Once East has won the king or queen of diamonds at trick one, as long as he bothers to work out what WE have worked out, the hand IS an open book. All East has to do is to return a club at trick two, then another club when in with a trump, and a third club when in with the second trump. Having lost three tricks already, declarer must ruff the third club. Otherwise, WEST can ruff it. Hence, one of the club tricks has gone down the drain. Declarer now must draw West's final trump. After cross ruffing two tricks, declarer is still left with a red suit loser somewhere.

Would not a club lead, then, have defeated the contract? Well no, because even if West is given the club ruff, E-W have not made any diamonds, and when trumps are drawn West's second and third trumps are taken care of and now declarer can discard on the two clubs and cross ruff the last four tricks!

CHAPTER 15

A RISKY MANOEUVRE

The other night my partner pulled off one of the great coups of the three day event. And THAT was in just the SECOND session, there must be more brilliance still to come.

This was the hand he was looking at:

♠ K 7 3
♥ J 9 5 3
♦ 10 8 7 4 2
♣ 7

Since it's always South who perpetrates the brilliancies, Willy Riskett was South. Opponents were vulnerable and we were not and after Willy passed, Mary Rose on his left opened 2D, which her partner alerted. I really wasn't interested, so followed my usual methods and passed without asking. I expected that if this was some form of "Multi", Mary Rose and Rosemary were sure to stuff it up. They normally manage to. Rosemary bid 2H and now good old Willy asked what the 2D opening was. Rosemary explained that it was a "Three Way Multi". That galvanised Willy into action. Riskett by name.... As the saying goes. He bid 3D. Mary Rose, as usual, now took five minutes to come up with her next bid, which was DOUBLE. Rosemary really doesn't have much imagination, and a double is a double as far as she's concerned, so she passed. Let's have a look at all the hands before we go any further:

BOARD 3 DLR S EW VUL

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

The defence did not need to be brilliant. Willy took two diamond tricks and one spade, down five. ONLY FIVE! That HAD to be a great score since with a combined 32 count surely opponents had just been talked out of a vulnerable slam. As indeed they had. But, as Willy turned over the travelling score card, I heard an involuntary gasp as he scanned to scores. There were one or two who hadn't bid the slam, and the rest, well, THEY seemed to have either a "1" or a "2" with a circle round it and a score in OUR column. Those who had bid the slam, either in clubs or in No Trumps (and nearly EVERYONE was in 6NT, you've probably heard of the NT Syndrome at our club), had failed miserably in their efforts to make 12 tricks.

"Not to worry Willy", I said. "Your BID was perfect, and it SHOULD have scored a clear top if everyone had the declarer skills. Unfortunately, you weren't playing in a room of geniuses, but dunces. I can guarantee that if I asked my friend Hung Lo how to play the hand, HE would have made it. He's here on a visit from China, at the Mental Health seminar. I'll ask him just so you don't feel too bad about scoring a RISKY zero that deserved to be a RISKETT top.

So, next day, I had lunch with Hung Lo. I passed the EW hands to him and put him, as declarer, in the WEST seat, in a contract of 6NT. Just to make it DIFFICULT for him, I decided to give him the JACK OF DIAMONDS lead.

“OK, Lo, how would you play this one?” I asked.

(hands repeated for convenience)

Board 3 DLR S EW VUL

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

Hung Lo studied the hands and proceeded: “I win in hand and lead a club to the ace. What do North and South play?” I answered that North followed with the four and South with the seven.

“Next, I lead a club back to the king”. I told him South showed out and asked WHY he’d play that way.

“Restricted choice and psychology, dear boy. I find that nearly ALL bridge players follow with their LOWEST card. North would have been silly to give a COUNT against a SLAM, so I would have nothing to go on other than that both would play their LOWEST club. South’s club was HIGHER than North’s, therefore if anyone had four clubs, it was NORTH.”

Hung Lo then continued: “If hearts break or jack falls singleton, I have twelve tricks. So, I give myself a second chance. I lead a spade and put in the NINE. If North has the ten, South must win the queen or king and now I have a possible finesse against North. Again, North CAN make life difficult by inserting the king or queen if they have the ten, but NOBODY would do that, why on earth would they? More psychology, people want to HOARD their high cards and they HAVE been taught that ‘second hand plays low’. All quite sensible advice and only a genius would slot the queen or king unless they had both. So, what happens when I insert the nine?”

I had to admit that South would win the king and return a diamond.

“Now looking good”. Hung Lo was looking quite excited at this stage. “In fact I think I can almost CLAIM! I take the club finesse, and the fourth club, cash third diamond and then top three hearts. I have only two cards left: the four of spades and eight of hearts. Dummy has AJ in spades. I know that North has two spades left. South has the jack of hearts plus a spade. If South has shown no discomfort in discarding, more psychology. Only a cool and very clever defender would bare the king of spades WITHOUT any signs of a problem. Furthermore, STATISTICS: I know the exact distribution after winning the clubs, diamonds, and three hearts. The odds must be huge that North, with FIVE spades, would have EITHER the queen or king, and South won the king earlier. When I lead the four of spades and North produces the TEN, I can be almost CERTAIN that the finesse will work. It doesn’t matter if North plays the spades in a different order or discards the ten earlier and follows with the five at trick twelve, I have psychology and statistics on my side. We learn a lot at these Mental Health seminars you know. NOW tell me that South started with KQx in spades and coolly bared the queen!”

“No, Hung Lo, your analysis is spot on. Willy will be wishing that you and 18 other Hung Los had been playing EW last night, but whether that will make him happy or not is another matter.