

PLANNING THE PLAY IN NO TRUMPS by Eddie Kantar

	North		
	K6	S.	
	AQ10	H.	
	AQJ9	D.	
West	8432	C.	East
S 10942			S QJ875
H KJ87			H 9654
D 832			D 64
C A5			C K6
	South		
	A3	S.	
	32	H.	
	K1075	D.	
	QJ1097	C.	

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: S7

Bidding Commentary: With 5-4 in the minors along with two doubletons and no slam interest, South should treat the hand as balanced and bid accordingly.

Lead Commentary: Suits headed by the QJ8x(x) are not considered sequence suits at notrump and a 4th best card is led.

QJ9 would have been a sequence.

To lead a queen at notrump you need a suit headed by the QJ10, QJ9 or the AQJ.

Vs a suit contract the queen is led from any QJ combination. At a suit contract two, not three, adjacent honors are considered a sequence.

Play Commentary: As South, you have seven winners and can easily set up three more in clubs.

That is, it would be easy if the opponents couldn't set up their spades first! But they can. Even if the opposing spades are divided 5-4, as evenly as possible, the opponents can set up three spade tricks before you can set up your clubs.

You can't win the spade-club race. You must look elsewhere for two extra tricks. 'Elsewhere' is hearts. You need three heart tricks. This means finding West with both the king and jack. It's your only chance. Win the spade lead in dummy and lead a heart to the ten. Now open your eyes. Guess what? The ten has won the trick. Now all you have to do is repeat the heart finesse for nine tricks.

When you have a choice between a low chance play (double heart finesse) or a no chance play (driving out the AK of clubs), take a chance! Live a little.

Note that whenever you have AQ10 opposite 2 or 3 small cards in that suit, it is often right to play small to the 10. If it loses to the K, then at least your AQ are now good. If it loses to the J, then you finesse the other hand for the missing K.

Of course, on this hand, it won't work if it loses but just live right and it will all go well!

BARBARA'S TIP OF THE WEEK

Partner opens 1 C and you have:

S AK98
H A987
D K985
C 4

Well? I would strongly recommend responding 1D with this hand. When you are responding with 10 or more points, always bid your four-card suits up the line. With a weaker hand – say without the S AK so that your hand is in the 6-9 points range -- bypass the diamond suit and bid 1H as you'll only get one kick at the can.

Bidding 1D prepares you perfectly for every eventuality: if partner now bids 1H or 1S you can raise her major to game. The one who knows goes!

1C - 1D
1H - 4H

or
1C - 1D
1S - 4S

But what if partner rebids 1NT instead?

1C - 1D
1NT - ?

Do you bother to mention your spade suit? Or your heart suit? No, partner does *not* have four hearts or four spades: she has specifically denied this by bidding 1NT. In this scenario you should raise to 3NT immediately.