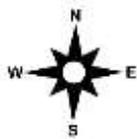


TEST YOUR PLAY

S 862
H A532
D Q43
C 652

S ---
H KQJ109876
D 82
C J109



S 9753
H ----
D 109765
C Q843

S AKQJ104
H 4
D AKJ
C AK7

W	N	E	S
4H	P	P	6S
All pass			

Opening lead H King.

It is easy if you see all four hands. But it defies gut instinct to not play the H Ace at trick one.

Remember though that 4H is like a 3H opening bid on steroids. West has 8 of those things. If you play the H Ace, you KNOW that East is going to ruff it. So, since you NEED that H Ace in order to throw away your C 7, DUCK the H Ace and when West continues with another Heart, duck it again or East will still ruff.

Now ruff that second H in your hand. Now draw trump and cross to dummy's D Q. Play your H Ace and discard your C 7 on it.

This play is called a loser on a loser. It is counter-intuitive but reminds us to slow down at trick one and plan the play.

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail.

Remember Simon & Garfunkel! "Slow down, you play too fast!"

Hand by Eddie Kantar. Commentary by Barbara

Larry Cohen

Misconception: Don't open 1NT with a 5-card major.

Truth: 1NT is a better descriptor of a balanced 15-17 point hand than opening 1-of-a-major.

Opening 1NT with a five-card major is the new normal. There are several advantages to opening 1NT with a five-card major (and 5-3-3-2 shape) . 1NT shows a very specific hand type: 15-17 points with a balanced hand. That is a lot more information than opening 1H or 1S which shows five-plus cards in that suit and 12-21 points. Not only is the point range narrower, but knowing that partner has at least two of everything means that you know eight cards in his hand rather than five.

There are other advantages: One of the first things we learn as bridge players is how to bid after partner opens 1NT. As a result, opening 1NT allows partner to a) evaluate his hand and b) use the tools at his disposal to find a major-suit fit.

For an example of when this is better If you open 1H instead of 1NT and partner holds:

S 87543 H 7 D Q87 C Q543.

Partner will pass, leaving you in a six-card fit. Meanwhile, opening 1NT leaves you in a much better 2 contract in either a seven- or eight-card fit.

Opening 1NT also avoids a frequent rebid problem. If you open 1H and partner bids 1S, how can you show 16 points and a balanced hand? Rebidding 1NT shows 12-14 HCP, 2NT shows 18-19 HCP. You're stuck.

Lastly, opening 1NT will make it difficult on your opponents. It is harder for them to enter the auction than after 1H or 1S. Also, making an opening lead can be a guess. It's conventional bridge wisdom that on the auction 1NT-3NT, you try to lead a major if at all possible. With that in mind, sometimes your opponents will lead right into your five-card major.

One last caveat. While I encourage you to open 1NT with a five-card major and 5-3-3-2 shape, I am not a fan of opening 1NT with 5-4-2-2 shape with a five-card major AND a four-card suit somewhere. With those hand shapes, you don't have a rebid problem. Open with 1 of the suit.

TIPS by EDDIE KANTAR

We have printed 1-20 before. Here are the rest. Eddie Kantar won many World Championships and is the world's greatest bridge author and teacher. He has been my guru since we first got to know him in 1996. And that was because of Lee Daugharty, who was bringing Eddie to Toronto to teach a class at Hart House. (LEE held a contest among all the clubs who sold his fabulous bridge calendar that he started many years ago and Hart House won.) Lee called us up and asked us if we would like to have Eddie teach a class at Kate Buckman's Bridge Studio (owned by us). We jumped at the opportunity. He is a legend.

- 21 As declarer, being able to take a trick with one of two equal cards, take the trick with the higher equal. The exception is at no trump when you have an AK stopper. If you plan to take the trick, take it with the king. Taking the first trick with the ace is very suspicious. If that were your only stopper, why didn't you hold up?
- 22 As declarer when leading a suit that has equal honors, lead the higher or the highest if you want it covered, lead the second highest if you don't want it covered. It works like a charm.
- 23 As declarer, play cards you are known to hold if it cannot cost you a trick. For example, if a queen is led, dummy has small cards, you have KJ doubleton and the ace is played on your right, play the king. NOT the jack. Third hand knows you have the king from the lead of the queen, and the opening leader knows you have the king from partner's play of the ace. Since the king and jack are equals, and since they both know you have the king, PLAY IT! PLAY IT!
- 24 Defend passively if side suit tricks cannot get away; defend aggressively if they can. Reread this tip!
- 25 Be on the lookout to double artificial bids (Stayman, Jacoby Transfers, cuebids, Blackwood responses) to help partner out on opening lead. However, low level doubles of artificial bids require both length and strength (typically five or six card length with 3+ honor cards in the suit). The higher the level of the artificial bid, the shorter your length must be-but you still must have honor strength in the suit (KQx, for example).
- 26 As declarer, assuming the opponents are playing standard leads and standard signaling, concealing cards lower than the one that has been led or lower than the one played by your RHO confuses the count plus the meaning of the signal.
- 27 The bidding is the key to defensive strategy and to a great extent influences the play of the hand. Treat the bidding as you would a best friend.
- 28 If you and partner lead Ace from Ace-King, be forewarned that it is a trick one strategy only. After trick one the king is led from ace-king combinations. The king is also led when defending contracts at the five level or higher. The reason for this is that the ace is often led without the king at such a high level.
- 29 When signaling encouragement with equal spot cards, signal with the higher equal. With A987, signal with the 9. If you signal with the 8, you deny the nine!
- 30 Take your time before playing third hand to the first trick. It is often times the most important play you will make in the entire hand.