Marriage & Divorce

by Harold Schogger

Marry up the bidding and the play

It's easy to forget that how we play the cards can be determined by the bidding. Try to remember the bidding before playing out the hand and gather all the clues. Let's have a look at this hand and see how the bidding might dictate the card play:

Love All. Dealer West.

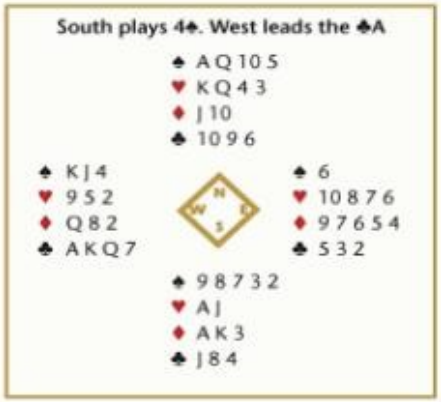
W	N	E	S
1♠	Dble	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

You are sitting South. After partner doubles you bid 4♠ with your own opening bid. E/W are playing Acol (4-card suits) with a weak no trump. West leads three top clubs, East following, and then switches to a heart – over to you.

Your hearts and diamonds are solid, but you need to pick up the spade suit for no losers. Your side has 25 points, and the opposition has 15. What can you deduce? West opened, but could they have just 12 points? How should you play the spades?

After the first three tricks you can deduce that West is ***balanced*** as everybody followed to three rounds of clubs. If West is balanced why didn't West open 1NT in the first place? Aha, he must have more than 14 points – indeed he must have all the remaining points. West must have both the ♣K and the ♠J. When you win the heart (in hand) you should lead the ♠9. If West plays low you should play low from dummy. This is sure to hold and you can play a spade again, covering West's card. Note that if you had inserted the ♠Q from dummy West would still make a spade trick later. Here's the full deal.

South plays 4♠. West leads the ♣A



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Let's have a look at another example where we can produce the right play by listening to the bidding.

N/S Game. Dealer West.

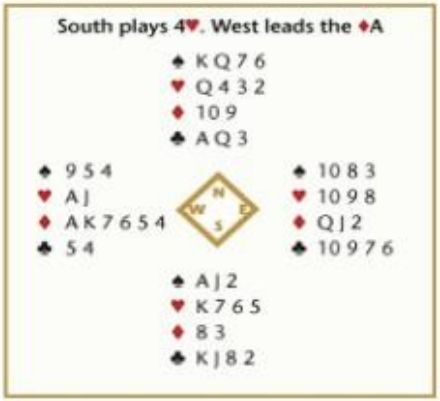
W	N	E	S
1♦	Dble	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

You are sitting South. After partner doubles the 1♦ opening bid you end up in 4♥ and West leads ♦A on which East plays the ♦Q. Playing a queen promises a singleton or the jack, and indicates an ability to win the next trick should partner wish to switch the lead. However, West continues with the ♦K (East plays the ♦2) followed by a spade. You are in a ten-trick contract and cannot afford to lose more than one more trick, so what is your plan?

You cannot do anything about losing the trump ace so you will need to play the trump suit well. With Kxxx opposite Qxxx the correct way to play this combination is to finesse one of the opponents straight away and then play a low card from each hand hoping the ace 'falls on air'. So who do we play for the doubleton ace?

Back to the bidding. West made an opening bid, so he almost certainly started with at least 11 out of the 15 missing points. It looks like East had the ♦Q and ♦J, so West must hold the ♥A as well as his top diamonds to justify an opening bid of 1♦. So now you will have to hope it is doubleton. Win the third trick in hand and play a low trump. West follows suit and you play dummy's queen. It holds. Now play a low heart from each hand and you are delighted when the ace falls. Your remaining king will draw East's ten later. Here's the full deal:

South plays 4♥. West leads the ♦A



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