

## HAND OF THE WEEK

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Here are a few deals from my session with my Juniors last night that had simple but important points to discuss. One of the deals is worthy of a big writeup, and I will save it for last. The first deal is a simple declarer play problem. Well, it's simple if you see the trick. But the trick is not well known.

Dummy: ♠K10 ♥6 ♦Q983 ♣AK9842

Your Hand: ♠AQ964 ♥KQ2 ♦A2 ♣873

You opened 1♠ at IMPs with nobody vulnerable. (A judgment call, I think I would do the same on days with a "u".) LHO bid 3♥, preemptive, and partner chose to make a negative double, showing the minors and a pretty good hand since he is asking you to bid at the 4-level. You, reassured about the minor suits, decided to bid 3NT, and nobody had any more to say. LHO leads the ♥J. Plan the play.

You have two choices. You can win this trick and try to run one or both black suits. At matchpoints that would be clear, since you would make all the tricks if they both ran. But with LHO likely to have 7 hearts, even splits in either black suit are less likely than normal. I favor the other route at IMPs, which is why I have presented this problem here. I think you should duck the first trick. If hearts are, in fact, 7-2, this means that you will make your game if either black suit behaves, and behaving is extended to either an even split OR RHO having the stopper. So you duck the first heart and LHO continues with Ace and another as you discard two diamonds from dummy. What do you think of LHO's play of the heart suit?

LHO thinks he has an entry to his hearts. OK, which suit do you go for? I think it's clear to go for clubs, planning to cover the 5 with the 8 and force RHO to win a club. If that happens, you will have 3 spades, 5 clubs, and one in each red suit, 10 tricks. You lead a low club, but LHO plays the Q. You must win this, and RHO follows low. Now what? Test clubs by playing the K. LHO discards a spade. So you give up a club, and have the rest. Easy had. But the point of the deal is that sometimes it is right to forgo winning a trick with KQx in order to destroy defensive communication.

The next hand is a simple bidding problem. You have ♠AQ8 ♥A1084 ♦A96 ♣A83 and open 1♣. LHO overcalls 1♦, passed back to you. What do you bid?

The right bid here is 1NT – if partner had bid, you would have to bid 2NT to show this hand. But since partner chose not to bid, he is likely to have less than 6 points. So game is not likely, and rebidding 1NT with less than 15 points would be unduly risky.

On to the feature deal. My Juniors had an unusual auction, which I won't bother to bore you with. But the upshot of the auction was that you have become declarer in 4♠ with no opposing bidding.

Dummy: ♠A1076 ♥AK6542 ♦-- ♣AQ9

Your Hand: ♠Q54 ♥83 ♦AJ105 ♣K1065

LHO leads the ♦2, you pitch a heart from dummy, RHO plays the Q and you win with the Ace. You play a spade to the 10 at trick 2. (I think this is right, but I'm not sure. But this is what declarer did at the table, and it's something I would at least consider.) The ♠10 wins the trick. Now what?

It's clear to start hearts now. If you cash the ♠A now, when you lose a heart trick they might be able to draw all the trumps and cash a diamond, which would beat you. Leading a low spade isn't much better,

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since your LHO surely has the ♠KJ. He can win, draw another trump, and play a diamond. If you ruff this, they will have a diamond to cash when they win their heart trick.

The safest way to play this deal is to cash one heart from dummy, play a club to the K, and play another heart. If LHO has 4 spades and a singleton heart, he can't afford to ruff this, so you will win and ruff a heart in hand. If LHO overruffs this, his best defense is to lead a high spade. This will draw your last trump, but you will simply win this trick in dummy and lead a heart. They will win this, but your only further loser will be the defense's only remaining trump, since you can ruff a diamond in dummy and just lead winners.

In real life, LHO had 4 spades and a doubleton heart, so the careful play of crossing in clubs wasn't necessary. But that's a good technique for you to put into your arsenal anyway, because there are many deals where you must avoid having a winner ruffed as best you can.

OH, about that bidding accident – partner opened that hand 2♣ and your later spade bid was intended as artificial and not so understood. Of course that North hand is nothing close to a 2♣ opening, you should have 8+ winners to do so. It's hard to count that heart suit as more than about 4.5 winners, and you have to be severely optimistic to think you had 4 winners in the black suits. A simple auction of 1♥-1NT, 2♠-3NT, 4♥ would have gotten to a much less interesting game to play. Bad bidding makes for good declarer play. I know, I am a prime example.