

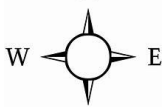
Hand of the Week 10/01/19

By Frank Merblum

2 Declarer Problems – 9 Ever & Don't Be in a Rush to Play Trumps

Both of these hands come from today's game (Tuesday, 10/1/19) where I played with the sage of the HBC, Simon Kantor. On Board 1, you quickly arrive in 3NT holding these hands:

Dir: N ♠ J85
Vul: None ♥ 1075
 ♦ 7
 ♣ AK9732

N
W  E
 S

 ♠ Q73
 ♥ A94
 ♦ AKJ6
 ♣ J104

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Lead: 4♠

Note that North refrains from opening 3C for a variety of reasons. The hand has too much defense and the 3-3 in the majors is a major flaw, an easy way to miss a 5-3 major suit fit. Now for the play as follows:

West leads the 4 of spades and East wins the King and returns the 2. Dummy's jack takes the trick. At this point, you have a virtual lock to make 4. West has clearly led from a 3-card suit, because East (an excellent player) would have returned his highest spade, rather than the 2, if he started with three spades. Furthermore, since West did not win the second spade, East must have AKxx.

So how do you play the clubs at match points? It seems right to cash a high club from dummy (remember to unblock the 10 or J) and everyone plays small.

Now think about the lead – if West has led from a 3 spades, his distribution must be 4 triple 3 since he shouldn't have a 5-card suit or two 4-card suits or he likely would have led one of them.

So you can be virtually assured that West has Qxx of clubs. Simon did just that, finessing the Queen on the second round of clubs and made 4 for a good score.

Most books say with 9 cards in a suit missing the Queen, it is usually right to play for the drop and not finesse. However, this is a logical exception and, therefore, the title of 9 Ever. Note that at IMP scoring, it would be easy to finesse the clubs since that guarantees 9 tricks.

Now, here is board 10 from today:

I held ♠K6 ♥K103 ♦Q10754 ♣K84 and the bidding went as follows:

1C on my right and never shy to bid, I chose a 1D overcall. It then went 1H on my left, 2C by partner (cue bid for diamonds) and 2H on my right. I passed and partner bid 3D ending the auction. The opening lead is the Jack of clubs and dummy is tabled:

Dummy

♠ J842
♥ A5
♦ A932
♣ 963

Declarer

♠ K6
♥ K103
♦ Q10754
♣ K84

Your right hand opponent wins the Ace of clubs and plays the Queen which you take with the King. At first glance, it looks like you need the Ace of spades onside to make this.

However, at this point, you can almost name the distribution for both defenders. Your right hand opponent probably has 3-3-2-5 distribution. Note that he can't have 4 hearts since he would probably have pushed on to 3 hearts and that would leave your left hand opponent with 4 hearts and 4 spades. Most people with that shape would make a negative double rather than bid 1H.

OK, now that you have figured all of this out, the play becomes easy. Ruff out the hearts (righty plays the Queen on the third round) and play Ace and another diamond. Righty has KJ doubleton and the best he can do is cash the 10 of clubs and play a low spade or give you a ruff and a sluff. However, now count the points. Righty has the AQ of clubs, KJ of diamonds and the Q of hearts. If he has the Ace of spades, he would have opened 1NT, so you play low on the spade and are rewarded since he has Qxx. You make 3 for a decent score.

The moral of the story: don't be in a rush to play trumps. If you had done so at trick 3, RHO could have safely exited a heart and you would have been forced to play spades yourself and lose 2 spade tricks.