

Bridge Theory for the Practitioners

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34. All the Marbles @ Matchpoints, Part II

Denver has been good to us in 2013. In two days, we won a Regional A-B pair event straight and came 2nd in another regional A-B pair event. I will introduce here a few hands from the Denver regional tournament. So this will be a special column, breaking the usual format of bidding, defense, and card play sequence.

Hand 1. “If only she had the ten” showed up but in disguise

For a background on this topic, I would like to refer my readers to my column number 29 where I first discussed defensive plays based on a hopeful hand construction. The whole defense in this scenario depends on a hope that partner might hold at least the ten (usually of trumps). This particular type of defensive hand showed up in Denver at the A-B pair event. History repeats itself in disguise, however as you will see.

The bidding goes (they are red; we are not)

1D (p)	1S	P (me)	P
X	2S	P	P
X	P	3C	3S
All pass			

I lead the 4 of H and dummy hits with

Q 4	K J T 9 8 7	9 8	T 7 3
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Partner held

9
A Q 5 3
Q 5 4 3 2
A K Q

J of H is played from dummy. How would you defend after winning the Q of H when declarer plays the 6?

I could have the 4 2 of Hs, so she plays next the K of C asking me hey, what is going on? I play the 2 of C saying, yes, really that was a stiff and I am ruffing Hs. Now she goes to the tank facing a very difficult question. What is the right defense? 1) Give me the H ruff immediately or 2) Cash the A of C, then cash the A of H, and *then* give me the H ruff?

If she gives me the H ruff immediately which all A/B players in the room but her did (from the fact that we got an absolute top on the board), this is what happens. After ruffing I would play a C back to her and she would then lead a third H. Now declarer ruffs big and plays AK of D and ruffs a D in dummy. Declarer is now able to draw trumps and lose only 4 tricks: 2Cs, 1H and 1 H ruff. Making 3S. 3S was not that bad a bid after all.

But she would not settle for that sort of nonsense. She cashes the A of H, then cashes the A of C and then plays a H for me to ruff. Because of my original pass, she knows I could not hold much but I could have the Txxx of trumps from the auction. She figured out that this trump holding in my hand would be enough for the contract to be set.

What was my hand?

T 6 4 2 4 J T 7 J 8 6 5 2

Hand 2. Key Card auction in the face of intervention

Partner opens 1S and I held

A 2 A K J 9 8 4 2 T 8 2 K

I bid 2H, game forcing promising an opening hand and 5+ Hs. She bids 2S which in our methods shows a hand with 5+ S (not necessarily 6 Ss) that is not willing to bid any number of Notrump from this end (lest the NT contract is wrong-sided). I bid 3H (hey I have lots of Hs) and now she bids 4D, which I took as H support and a *courtesy* cue bid in D showing Ace / King / Singleton / Void in Ds and at the same time denying 1st or 2nd round control of Cs. My Ace of S looked very promising in this auction and I did not want to settle for 4H any longer. If she had the A of D, we are favorites to make 6H. So I bid 4N and she responds with 5C (1430) showing one keycard. This bid however is doubled! Now what do you do?

That of course depends on your agreements. Here are our agreements:

If they bid or X over our Key Card response then,

- Sign off at the 5 level = I have 2 Quick Losers in their suit.
- X or XX = I have 2 quick losers but I have the Q of their suit such as Qx or Qxx so that you might be able to protect with the suit with K. If so bid slam. This is based on a suggestion by Ron Klinger, a top-notch Australian player and author of many Bridge books.
- P = Forcing; don't have 2 quick losers;

Responses to the Forcing Pass:

- Double/Redouble with 1st round control (This will help us bid the Grand)
- Otherwise bid your lowest King (if you have one) below the trump suit at the lowest level.

(It is definitely possible to have more elaborated agreements, but this is kind of a minimum set that covers practically everything).

So in the above hand, I pass showing at most one club loser and she bids 6H. *All the marbles.*

Hand 3. Ducking your “sure” trick to avoid being end-played

The auction goes thusly:

P	P (me)	1D	1S (partner)
P	1N	3D	all pass

Partner leads a small H and dummy shows up with:

	Q J x x x	J x	x x	x x x x
I held				
				x
				A x x x x
				K x x
				Q T x x

So I win the A of H and return another H. Declarer wins with the King, ruffs a H, and takes a D hook which wins. I thought I am sitting pretty with my Kx of D now with no diamond cards in

dummy. But declarer now plays the A of S and another spade that partner *ducks*. I ruff this one and put my Q of C on the table. We take 1H, 1 ruff, 2C tricks making 3Ds. This was a very good result as many folks made 4D. If my partner had won the K of Ss, she had to play either an S or C and in both of these cases we lose a trick.

To make matter easy for my partner (she needs help, doesn't she? ☺), I needed to play a small club at trick two after winning the A of H.

This old man is dreaming about lions.