# **Bridge Theory for the Practitioners**

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## 29. If Only She Had the Ten

Ten is the most underrated honor card in Bridge. In this column on defense, I will give you examples that will make you think of the Ten more fondly. The most beautiful hand constructions come when setting the contract depends on *partner* holding this card. Without further ado, let's start with hands.

### **Example 1. Both White.**

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1H P (me) 1S P
2H all pass.
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I lead the A of D holding the hand below as West. Dummy's hand (North) is also shown.

43 J87 AK82 A983

Partner plays the 9. We play *standard count* at trick 1. I continue with the K and she plays the 2. I dutifully play the 2 of D showing her my entry in C and she ruffs with the 3 of H. Now she does something very interesting. She plays the K of C which wins and she plays the 4 of C to my Ace. So this is what has happened so far:

We have won all 5 tricks so far and the contract is booked. What do I do at trick 6? I thought, **if only she had the Ten** of Hs and played the 4<sup>th</sup> D which she ruffs with the Ten and my Jack of H is promoted for the setting trick.

## Example 2. They are Red, we are not.

1H	P	1 <b>S</b>	2C (me)
2S	P	4S	All pass.

I lead the A of C holding the hand below. Dummy's hand is also shown.

KQ97 AKQT7 T8 82

AJ5 43 543 AKJ75

Partner plays the 3 showing an odd number of cards most probably 3 (with 5Cs, she is not letting them play in 4S at this vulnerability). What to do now? Are we setting this? I was thinking what to do and then it came to me: I have the AJx of trumps, **if only she had the Ten.** I continue with the K of Cs and then play the 5 of Cs at trick 3.

So this is what has happened so far:

Trick 1. A of C, 2, 3, 9.

Trick 2. K of C, 8, 6, T. --- Note that 6 of C from partner. She had the 4 and yet played the 6 as a suit preference card telling me that she has no interest in D. When count is known, the next play points to suit preference.

Trick 3. 5 of C, 8 of D, 4 of C, **Q of C**.

Now at trick 4, Declarer plays the 2 of S and I jump with the A. And then, .... thinking if she only had the T of S, I play a  $4^{th}$  C for a ruff and a sluff. To tell you the truth, I was scared; if I am wrong what would come is this: "Just exactly what are you doing over there setting up declarer's Q of C, giving him a D discard, and now a ruff and a sluff?"). But today was my lucky day. Not only does she show up with the Ten of S but ruffs with the Ten as well. 4S down one.

### Example 3. Both White.

1C Pass (me) 3NT all pass.

Partner leads the 3 of H and I see the dummy (North) holding this hand as East

A J 5 T 9 8 7 K Q J J 3 2

Trick 1. H-3, 7, 5, **J.** 

Trick 2. **K of C**, 4, 2, 8 (my 8 tends to show S interest --- we play Suit Preference when declarer first plays suit number 2.

Trick 3. **Q of C**, 5, 3, 7. (Now my 7 confirms the S interest).

Trick 4. T of C, A, J, 6.

After winning the A of C, partner goes to the tank. I know she is thinking about the playing S but which card? And I thought: **if only she had the Ten of S.** Lo and behold, she puts that card on the table. This is the only card that sets the contract as the S suit breaks like:

Note that a small S play by her does not work and neither does the K of S play by her. After the hand was over, she said, I was hoping for the 9 in your hand but this exact holding would work too. Yes, if the S suit breaks like

Then also, only the Ten sets the contract. This is an example of **middling** (quite different from a textbook **surrounding play** actually) that I will talk about in my next column on defense.

#### Example 4. This time I had the Ten and disaster strikes.

The auction is 1N - 3N and partner leads the 9 of Hs. In our method this shows no interest in Hs (in NT contracts). I see the dummy (North) holding this hand as East:

9 4 3 T 2 A Q J T 4 3 K 4

> KT86 AJ5 762 T98

I win the A of Hs and realizing that S is the suit we must attack to set the contract I played the T of S. A textbook surrounding play looking at the 9 in dummy. Of course, disaster strikes as the S suit breaks like:

9 4 3 A 7 5 2 K T 8 6

Declarer's 9<sup>th</sup> trick is the 9 of S. I made the textbook surrounding play without realizing that to set the contract, partner must have either AJx or Axxx of Ss. In either of these cases, a small S is the right play.

#### **References:**

- 1. All these hands are taken from "The Deadly Defence Quiz Book" by W. Izdebski, R. Krzemien, and Ron Klinger. I might have modified the hands a little bit here and there to match my commentary.
- 2. Example 2 is a famous hand from the 1980 Cavendish pair that both Reference 1 and Rodwell ("The Rodwell Files", page 166) have highlighted.