

SAMPLE First 6 pages of 15 pages

Bridge Today University and Bridgetoday.com present:
Championship Hand Study 240
(Or, "Hands I Got Right for a Change")
with Eddie Kantar

Lesson One

Welcome to my Internet classroom. This time I have some problem hands mostly on declarer play, with a few on defense to keep you on your toes.

I don't like to blow my own horn, but over the years (many years), I have actually made a few decent plays. Some of these have even been written up. I recently uncovered a stack that had been filed away eons ago. These are the hands I am going to throw at you in this course. You will have a chance to play the hands, and the learning part comes in the discussion that follows each hand. The main point is to teach yourself to think the right thoughts when the dummy comes down.

In order to make this more fun (?) for you, each hand comes with a point count rating from 1-10, "1" representing the easier hands, "10" representing, "don't ask." Keep in mind that overtricks could be important (depending upon the type of event you are playing in), so don't relax even if you see you are going to make the contract. Keep in mind that I took the right view (some would say "got lucky") on these hands, so your line of play might be equally good, or even better, but may not work. You will have to make your own scoring adjustments when these abominations occur.

Ready?

#1 (7 points)

This hand comes from a National Board-a-Match Team of Four tournament, where every trick is crucial, and my left hand opponent was none other than the legendary Howard Schenken.

Dlr: South

Vul: Both

North
 Q 7
 9 6 3 2
 Q 7 5 3
 A 8 4

South (you and me)
 A K 9 8 4 3
 K 5
 A
 Q J 9 6

South	West	North	East
1S	Pass	1NT	Pass
3C	Pass	3S	Pass
4S	(All Pass)		

Opening lead: DJ

I sort of fell in love with my hand, but had I rebid 2C or 3S, the final contract would have been the same. Obviously I was playing with a good player because he had two lovely cards, the SQ and the CA. Partner's spade preference after a 1NT response tends to show a doubleton; with three spades partner normally raises. Onward.

I won the opening lead (nice play, Edwin) and played three rounds of spades ending in my hand. The spades divided three two; on the third spade Schenken, who sat West, discarded the HT.

An Aside

A Useful Tip: Schenken's discard of the HT did not necessarily mean that he had the HA, because great players are not in the habit of telling declarer which cards they have. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that the average player finds it easier to discard from a suit headed by an ace than from one headed by the queen.

Back to the hand:

The next question is how to play the clubs. I needed three club tricks for my contract, or two clubs and the king of hearts. The obvious next move is to see how many club tricks I have, while preserving my ace of clubs in dummy as an entry to play a heart toward my king if necessary.

Another Aside

North
 Q 7
 9 6 3 2
 Q 7 5 3
 A 8 4

South (you and me)
 A K 9 8 4 3
 K 5
 A
 Q J 9 6

With no spots, the best play in clubs is the ace and low to the queen. If the queen wins, return to the dummy in another suit and lead low to the jack.

On this hand, my only dummy entry outside of clubs is the queen of spades. Therefore, had I held no club spots, I would have won the diamond, played two rounds of spades ending in DUMMY, then made my first club play toward the queen. If the queen wins, I pull trump, cross back to the ace of clubs, and play the third round of clubs toward my jack, hoping the king was on my right or the clubs were three-three with the king in either hand.

Back to the real hand:

With the strong club spots, I had extra chances by playing the queen out of my hand on the first round of clubs, because if the queen was covered by the king, I could knock out the ten and come to three club tricks, and if the queen lost to the king, I had the chance that the ten would fall on the next round. (If the club suit broke three-three it didn't matter what I did.) So I led the CQ.

Aside Number Three

Suppose East's club holding is the KT75 or KT75x and he knows you have at least four but possibly five clubs:

	North A 8 4					
West 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	East K T 7 5	
N						
W E						
S						
	South Q J 9 6 2					

Given this combination, East can make a neat defensive duck in this position:

Assume South is marked with at LEAST four clubs and leads the Q. East does best to duck quickly. If East wins, his guarded club T is at risk, particularly if South has five clubs (in which case West will show out when South plays a club to dummy's ace next time and the finesse against East's T is certain). Even if South has a four-card suit, he may be able to count out your hand (see Counting 140), and finesse you out of your CT anyway. However, if East ducks and South assumes West has the king, South may continue with the jack. Curtains!

Back to the real hand (again):

	North		
	Q 7		
	9 6 3 2		
	Q 7 5 3		
	A 8 4		
	South (you and me)		
	A K 9 8 4 3		
	K 5		
	A		
	Q J 9 6		

I played the CQ which won, and I continued with the jack of clubs, East playing the 7 and the T (whew; he hadn't done it to me). I now had my contract in the bag with six spades, three clubs, and the ace of diamonds, so it was time to think about an overtrick. How should I continue?

I decided to play two more rounds of spades (can't hurt). West pitched two diamonds, and East pitched a small heart and a small diamond. The next move was to cross to the CA, and then guess what to do.

Here are two possible end positions with South to play....

Possibility #1									
North									
—									
9 6									
Q 7									
A									
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	East	
	N								
W	S	E							
—		—							
A Q		J 8 7							
T		K 8							
K 5		—							
South									
9									
K 5									
—									
9 6									

Possibility #2									
North									
—									
9 6									
Q 7									
A									
West	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> </table>		N		W	S	E	East	
	N								
W	S	E							
—		—							
Q 7		A J 8							
T		K 8							
K 5		—							
South									
9									
K 5									
—									
9 6									

If you think East has the HA (Possibility #2), you must lead a heart toward your king. If you think West has it (Possibility #1), can you figure out a way to score an extra trick?

Right! Cross to the ace of clubs, ruff a diamond, and exit with a club, endplaying the great one and forcing a heart lead. (Since I guessed right, this hand is included.)

OK, which do you choose and why?

Actually, this hand isn't about guessing the end position. You can't be certain. As mentioned above, the fact that Howard Schenken threw the HT on the third round of spades means nothing; he might have thrown it from QT7 (although the HT discard would be a good clue against an average player).

So what did I base my decision on? When I was in dummy at trick nine with the CA, I knew my choices were: (1) lead up to the heart king, taking a simple finesse, or (2) going for the gold by ruffing a diamond and exiting with a club (a strip and endplay). If Schenken had the HA, I had an overtrick and a column hand; if East had the heart ace and had kept two diamonds in the end position, I had blown the overtrick because East's last two cards would be the DK and the HA. (However, if that were the case, do you think anybody would ever have seen this hand?)

The reason this hand is a "hand study" hand is because it illus-

trates how you can set up situations that give extra options. Another key point to this hand is the importance of playing as many "extra" trump as you can afford, in order to force discards and bring hands down to workable endings that otherwise couldn't be reached.

The whole hand:

	North		East
	Q 7		T 6 5
	9 6 3 2		J 8 7 4
	Q 7 5 3		K 8 6 4
	A 8 4		T 7
West			
J 2			
A Q T			
J T 9 2			
K 5 3 2			
	South (you and me)		
	A K 9 8 4 3		
	K 5		
	A		
	Q J 9 6		

When you have to guess what to do with no clues, take the line that shows off your declarer-play technique. I mean it. Even if it doesn't work, your opponents will know what you're capable of and begin to fear you. If it does work, you get a newspaper column.