

Join me for a 14 table matchpoint pairs game at the new Bay State Bridge game in Wellesley MA. Our opponents this round are not strong players.

When not vulnerable, Stew and I are prepared for partner to open a weak two-bid on a five card suit: 2 NT would ask, and the step responses are: $3 \clubsuit = \text{any hand with } 5$, $3 \diamondsuit = \text{bad}$, $3 \heartsuit = \text{medium}$, $3 \spadesuit = \text{good}$. Over $3 \clubsuit (5)$, partner may then ask with $3 \diamondsuit$, and the steps are again bad, medium, good. Stew was pleased to pass this time.

This horrible spade suit may not appeal to you, but I decided to get in there at favorable vulnerability. A top requirement for making a weak two bid on a five-bagger is to have a four card side suit. Also, our range is 3 to 9 HCP, not vulnerable, so I held kind of a max.

The preempt has worked! We have only 15 HCP between us, so the opponents may have missed a game.

West leads the \Diamond A, and East follows with the \Diamond 2. Who has the \Diamond Q?

Plan the play.

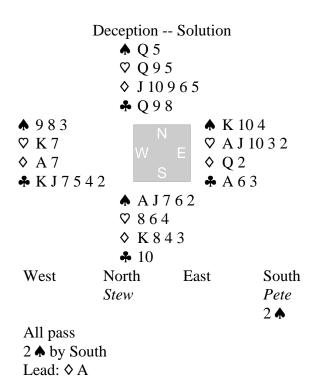
Surely, East has the \diamond Q. Why would West lead the ace from \diamond -A-Q-7 here?

Assume these folks play standard carding - don't stir the pot with questions about the lead or carding, when this hand is about deception. I hope you smoothly played the \heartsuit 8 at trick one. If West has the \diamondsuit 7, you really want to see it on the table at trick two. Signal like a defender when declaring. When you want the suit led again, signal high (standard carding). Also, you want to look like \diamondsuit -K-8, not \diamondsuit -K-8-4-3.

West obliges. What do you play from dummy on the \lozenge 7? After capturing the queen with your \lozenge K, how do you continue? What is your primary plan?

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Board 18South Deals
E-W Vul



Thanks to the friendly start, we now have a chance at eight tricks: four diamonds and four spades. However, the opponents can take at least six tricks, if they get it right: one diamond, one club, three hearts and at least one trump. The key is to muddy the waters. Call for the \Diamond J from dummy, on the second trick. Maybe one or both opponents will play partner for holding the rest of the diamonds.

Now lead a spade toward dummy. East captures the queen with the ♠ K. (This is actually good news -- watch what happens!) Our main hope is that we can regain the lead by ruffing a club, draw trump, and enjoy the diamonds.

From the perspective of East, a lead of either a heart or a club could cost a trick, if declarer holds the king of that suit. (Placing the • A with declarer, along with the • K, it's unlikely declarer has either of those cards, but intermediate players often don't bother to count. Also, partner led an ace; assume a heart or a club lead would have been less attractive.) With no entry to dummy outside diamonds, East exits with a "safe" spade.

Trumps split. What now?

Run the diamonds and pitch the 4 10. Here are our hands:

Don't ruff a club, which would shorten us to a single trump and probably prevent us from enjoying the ∇ Q if it became good. Smoothly call for the ∇ 5 from dummy. East, still not counting, flies with the ∇ A and leads another to West's king. Making three, + 140.

This would have been a top score, but two pairs played $5 \clubsuit$ their way, going down at least two (200). 3 NT made twice and failed once their way; $4 \heartsuit$ made once and failed once. This time, our overtrick did not affect the score, but going down in $2 \spadesuit$ would have reduced our score to only average. Especially in a mixed field, it's important to get inside the heads of the opponents and mess around a bit. Give them a chance to go wrong.