

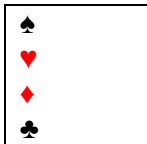
Learning Points – When Nothing Seems Right Create an Illusion

By Steve Moese

September 7, 2010

Defense Level: Intermediate/Advanced

West Deals
Both Vul
MPs



West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass
2♠ ²	Pass	3♣ ³	Pass
3♦ ⁴	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♦	All Pass		

South leads ???

1= 2/1 GF

2=4+♠s not necessarily extra strength

3=Natural, not asking, nor 4th Suit Forcing

4= Completing the pattern: 2 or likely 3♦s.

a natural call. EW are already in a game forcing auction so 3♣ cannot be 4th suit forcing. (Some pairs choose to bid 3♣ asking for a stopper – be sure to ask if you have doubts. West’s delayed raise paints a 5431 pattern in the order suits were bid. West had enough for game. (Note: if West had to raise on a minimum 5422, West might have passed 4♦).

The Play

Yes, this is a challenge at the opening lead. EW had a sound auction to game. Partner can’t have more than 2-3 HCP. The opponents have bid all 4 suits and they did not stop in NT. Maybe we can make this work to our advantage. The auction suggests the ♦K should be a defensive trick, but both major Ks are well placed for our opponents. If North has anything it’s likely in ♣s, the 4th suit bid. This doesn’t help for 2 reasons: West is likely short in ♣s and East has bid the suit. Declarer will likely try to set up ♥s or ♣s. A cross-ruff is a distinct possibility. A trump lead might be effective – at least it gives nothing away in the other 3 suits. That still leads to only 1 trick for NS.

The only way to create an extra trick is to make declarer believe that something is where it isn’t. The ♥K is doubleton. Perhaps the lead of the ♥4 will be into a finesse declarer would otherwise succeed at. Sometimes this type of lead can cause declarer to misplace key honors. South chose to lead the ♥4. Here’s declarer’s viewpoint →

With the ♥4 lead, declarer will suspect North holds the ♥K. North is subject to a ruffing finesse, on which the 2nd ♠ can be discarded eliminating any ♠ losers. Then cross ruffing will bring 11 tricks.

Unfortunately the cards weren’t as they seemed.

Tuesday Club Game, September 7, 2010 Mrs. Kay Mulford, Director.
Cincinnati Bridge Association Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road,
Cincinnati, OH 45241 (513) 631-8070 . Mike Ma is my partner.
We play Precision.

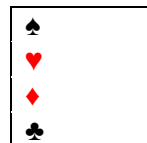
Listen closely to the auction. Your opponents might just be telling you that you face a difficult opening lead. When you find yourself in that position, try creating an illusion for declarer.

The Bidding

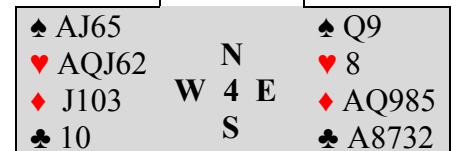
While sorting and evaluating the hand on this auction South considered whether to open this hand in 1st or 2nd seat. No – no texture and not enough quick ticks to go along with a weakish 12 HCP (11¼ by the expert HCP scale: A=4½, K=3, Q=1½, J=¾, 10=¼). South would probably open the hand 1♣ in 4th seat, but not like the bid very much. Anticipation helps choose actions when things can get complex – this avoids hesitations and delays that might not be advantageous for our side. Try to prepare several situations ahead to be ready just in case. West snaps South out of the daydream with the 1♥ opening bid. So much for anticipation.

East’s 2♦ call is game forcing so South keeps quiet. West replies showing at least 4 ♠s to go along with 5 or more ♥s. East bids 3♣ –

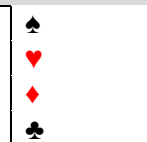
West Deals
Both Vul
MPs



5♦ by East



Opening Lead ♥4



West Deals Both Vul MPs	♠ 10743	5♦ by East
	♥ 109753	
	♦ 64	
	♣ K9	
♠ AJ65	N	♠ Q9
♥ AQJ62	W 4 E	♥ 8
♦ J103	S	♦ AQ985
♣ 10		♣ A8732
Opening Lead ♥4	♠ K82	NS:5♦, 4N
	♥ K4	
	♦ K72	
	♣ QJ654	

Declarer duly won the ♥A and led the ♥Q pitching the ♠9 from hand. South won the ♥K and switched to the ♣Q won by declarer in hand. Declarer ruffed the ♣2 to lead the ♦J for a trump finesse. The finesse lost and South escaped by leading the ♠2. Declarer won the ♠A felling the ♠Q from hand and led the ♥J for a ♣ pitch. South scored a ruff and returned a trump, leaving East to lose one more trick.

At the conclusion of the hand, West asked if South always make that kind of lead. South replied that everything else would give declarer a trick or a tempo so South chose deception instead. Apologies to our friends, but all is fair in war and bridge.

Yes, the double dummy solver says East can make 4N or 5♦. The double dummy solver doesn't have to deal with vexing opening leads. +200 was worth 8 MPs.

Pair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
MPs	4.5	4.5		0	2	8	7	2	2	6
Result	-600	-600		-660	-630	200	100	-630	-630	-130

Post Mortem

Here a well reasoned auction by sound capable opponents make an otherwise safe but deceptive lead a standout choice. South placed the missing ♥ honors with West and, left to their own plan, East would have taken a successful ♥ finesse later in the hand. The ♥ attack was unexpected, and declarer inferred North held the missing honor and played accordingly.

Score one for creating an illusion.

Learning Points

1. When opponents bid their way to an unusual contract and you hold the majority of the remaining HCP, consider a passive lead. Trumps are usually a good choice if NT has been bypassed.
2. If you hold a winner in their suit and need to create a winner to have a chance at a good score, lead right into that finesse on your left – but not into strength on your right. You might just convince declarer cards lie differently than they really do.
3. When sorting and evaluating your hands, anticipate your likely actions based on when your turn to speak is. Will you overcall if in 3rd or 4th seat? Will you open in 1st or 2nd seat? What will you do over partner's takeout double? You never know when forethought will pay dividends.
4. When evaluating hands in 1st or 2nd seat look for 2 QTs and a sound 12 HCP. Use the Rule of 22 (an improvement on the rule of 20) → **Open when HCP + Length of 2 longest suits + Quick Tricks (min 2) ≥ 22**. Be sure your honors are in your long suits and not in your singletons or doubletons. Downgrade all 4333 patterns, and 5332 patterns where your strength is in short suits.
5. All else equal, consider the Expert HCP Scale when evaluating hands at the edge of a strength range (Bottom or top). A lower score on the expert scale – devalue your hand. A higher score on the expert scale – up-value your hand. *Expert HCP scale: A=4½, K=3, Q=1½, J=¾, 10=¼*

Keywords: Anticipation, Quick tricks, Expert HCP Scale, Open - Rule of 22, Read opponent's bidding, Deceptive Leads