

TO HOLD UP OR NOT TO HOLD UP?

S 105
H K84
D 65
C AQJ863

S A98
H AQJ7
D A4
C 10952

S N

1N 3N Opening lead from West: S 2

N should not consider relaying to Clubs with a game going hand. Best to just bid 3NT.
IF NS had been playing Puppet Stayman, it would have been good to use that convention here just in case S had a 5 card Heart suit as playing on a 5-3 fit in Hearts is always preferable to being in 3NT.

S counts his winners in NT. SURE winners. Fast tricks.

S = 1
H = 4
D = 1
C = 1

7 tricks is not enough so S plans where his extra tricks will come from: Looks like Clubs. That is his project suit and that is the suit he will first lead...NOT his happy suit: Hearts.

W had led S 2. Do we hold up on S Ace? Or win it right away? BIG QUESTION!

How many Spades does West have?

West has four Spades. He led fourth best. Assume that. Don't assume in life but DO assume in bridge.

If West has four Spades, then East has four Spades. You have Spade Ace so worse case scenario, if opponents get in, they can take C King and three Spades.

Four tricks and you make 3 NT.

Problem is that if you duck (the traditional thing to do when you only have one stopper in bad guy's suit) that East may win and now shift to a Diamond. In Diamonds, you only have FOUR cards between you and dummy and East may have five Diamonds. Once they knock out your Diamond Ace, if East gets in with Club King...they will take gazillions of Diamonds.

Moral of the story: Do not hold up if you have another suit that is even more of a problem. Win Spade Ace immediately and attack Club suit. If finesse loses to East's Club King, they take that trick and three Spade tricks and that is all. Easy game, huh?

HOW WOULD YOU BID THIS HAND??

S 42
H 3
D A6
C 109875432

S J1098
H J9742
D J1073
C ---

S KQ63
H Q865
D K9842
C ---

Dealer: North

S A75
H AK10
D Q5
C AKQJ6

N	E	S	W
		2C	P
2D	P	2NT	P
??			

2D was waiting.
2NT showed 22-23 HCP Balanced

What would you now bid as North?

Possibilities:

a) 3S: Relay to Clubs. S would now bid 4C (as instructed) and N would bid 5C. Would S now bid 6C?

b) 4C by N after 2NT. Gerber, asking Aces. When N found out that their side had all 4 aces, he could now bid 6C, knowing that they had a 10 card fit minimum in C.

Alex and I made it all the way to 3NT making 12 tricks but we should get to 6C (makes 6NT but that is audacious).

PLAN THE PLAY

S Q95
H 542
D A95
C K843

S KJ1083
H AK63
D 82
C A7

S N

1S 2S
3S 4S

Opening lead: D King

Regardless of what you may think of the bidding, South is in 4S and West has led D King.

South must stop and make a plan, counting losers in his trump suit contract. We count losers in the hand with MORE trump. Usually that is declarer's hand.

S = 1 loser
H = 2 losers
D = 1 loser
C = 0 losers

4 losers is one too many.

Note that ruffing a Club in South hand (the Master hand or also known as the long hand) will not help you to gain a trick ever. If you ruff a C, you still have 4 losers. Count them.

We love to ruff in dummy but alas, there are no singletons or voids there. Note also that the odds of Hearts dividing 3-3 are very slim so you cannot count on that.

Dummy is not short in Hearts but it is your only hope. Do not pull any trump. Lead H Ace and K and concede a H. Give it away to charity. Now whatever opponents lead back, you win (or lose one D and then ruff the next one). When you regain the lead, lead the 4th H and ruff in dummy with S Q.

The reason you could not afford to draw trumps first is that if you draw two rounds of trump, then, when you concede a Heart, your opponent will now pull the third round of trump for you and now you will not have the S Q in dummy with which to ruff the losing Heart, your 10th trick.