

Declarer Play Technique II

By

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Season's Greetings, and all the best in 2023. Last month I shared a deal from the Unit 181 Nov 12, 2022 CNTC qualifying – Board 5. As it happens board 9 was another great lesson hand, but in a different aspect of declarer play. Plan the play in 2NT with the 4♥ lead.

Contract: 2NT By South Scoring: IMPs Lead: 4♥		♠	10 7 2		
		♥	A 10		
		♦	K 10 8 4		
		♣	Q J 6 2		
♠		N		♠	
♥		W E		♥	
♦		S		♦	
♣		♣		♣	
		♠	K 6		
		♥	Q J 8 3		
		♦	A 9 7		
		♣	K 9 8 3		

You are in a reasonable contract, though not cold by any means. On the plus side, you got a favourable heart lead. On the other hand you have to give the opponents the lead a couple of times, with the danger of them finding a spade shift. This is especially true if East gains the lead.

As usual we count our tricks: 3 hearts, 2 diamonds, and potentially 3 clubs, = 8 tricks. So we have several strategies to enact, in this order:

1. Discourage a spade shift.
2. Keep East off the lead, if possible.
3. Play the minors to maximize your tricks.

The play

At trick one you should win the A♥! Winning unnecessarily with the ace gives the opponents the illusion that you may not have heart values in your hand. To further give the illusion follow from your hand with the 8♥!! This card adds no value to the play, but gives the illusion that you are short in hearts.

At trick two lead the club queen. Even though you may occasionally limit your club tricks from 3 to 2 by this play, it is important to get the club ace out of the way as soon as possible, when the opponents have less information at their disposal. This play also allows the next club trick to be won on dummy or in your hand.

Sure enough, West wins the first club and not surprisingly cashes the K♥ and continued the suit. Great, but do not lose focus now! You have a likely 8 tricks. Cross to the J♣, and lead a diamond. When East plays low, put in the nine. It loses to the Jack, but the work is done. The full deal:

Contract: 2NT By South Scoring: IMPs Lead: 4♥		♠	10 7 2		
		♥	A 10		
		♦	K 10 8 4		
		♣	Q J 6 2		
♠	A J	N W E S		♠	Q 9 8 5 4 3
♥	K 9 6 4 2			♥	7 5
♦	J 6 5			♦	Q 3 2
♣	A 7 5			♣	10 4
		♠	K 6		
		♥	Q J 8 3		
		♦	A 9 7		
		♣	K 9 8 3		

On this deal you weren't in real danger, but still +150 was a tie for a top. In the long term good declarer technique is rewarded with good scores!

Moral of the Story

- When declarer you can false card to your hearts (pun intended) content.
- Look for opportunities to lose the lead to the safer opponent, whose shift cannot hurt you as badly as the other.
- Your lack of entries in one hand, versus the other, may determine the best line of play.
- An expert technique is establishing or maximizing the communication between your hand and dummy (or in other cases, minimizing the communication between the two defenders). This is done in several ways. One example is not taking your diamond ace on the first round of the suit here. On a different deal it may be accomplished by leading a singleton, and then using ruffs in that suit as entries.