

#192 Dlr: North
Vul: N-S

North
S. Q103
H. A87
D. 62
C. KQJ87

West
S. KJ52
H. QJ4
D. AQ3
C. A102

East
S. A98
H. 10932
D. K1084
C. 96

South
S. 764
H. K65
D. J975
C. 543

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	Pass	Dbl.
Pass	1H	Pass	1NT
All Pass			

Opening lead: CK

Bidding Commentary: North has a **mandatory** opening with 12 HCP and a five card suit. A reopening bid of 1NT in the passout seat (West), shows 11-14 HCP. West is too strong. To show 15-17 HCP, West doubles and then bids 1NT.

Defensive Commentary: North continues with high clubs until West wins the ace.

Play Commentary: West has six top tricks with chances for more in three suits. If diamonds break or the DJ drops, an extra trick is available there. If the spade finesse works, an extra trick or two is available there. In hearts, if you are willing to give up the lead twice, two certain extra tricks are available there. Mirror, mirror on the wall, which is the best suit of all?

As West, ask yourself how many tricks **they** can take once they get the lead. The answer is that you are in danger of losing four clubs, max, plus the AK of hearts for six. The idea is not to increase that count if possible. If you can establish tricks in a suit or suits where tricks have to be lost anyway, that's the suit for you. The mirror says: "Attack hearts. Don't worry about diamonds or spades, just drive out the AK of hearts." Why increase **their** trick count when you don't have to. However in a contract of 2NT or 3NT, you can't afford to let them in even once! You have to bring in diamonds and spades for the desired number of tricks. The last suit to attack is hearts!

#195 Dlr: South
Vul: Both

North
S. AK9
H. KJ10
D. KQ72
C. AKQ

West
S. 3
H. 96432
D. A109
C. J1087

East
S. 42
H. Q8
D. J86543
C. 965

South
S. QJ108765
H. A75
D. -
C. 432

South	West	North	East
3S	Pass	4NT	Pass
6D	Pass	7S	All Pass

Opening lead: CJ

Bidding Commentary: South's 6D response to North's Blackwood query shows 1 ace and a diamond void. North decides to gamble on a grand knowing that there are only 12 tricks! 7 spades, 3 clubs, and two hearts but sees so many chances for 13. If a red suit is led, there are 13 tricks. If South has two hearts and four clubs to go along with seven spades, there are 13 tricks as a club can be ruffed in dummy. If the DA ruffs out, there are 13 tricks. If all else fails there is always a two-way heart finesse. When there are so many chances for an extra trick, go for it!

Lead Commentary: It is far too risky to lead the DA after South has told the world of a diamond void. The club sequence is a safer choice.

Play Commentary: South can do better than take an early heart finesse. After the AK of spades, the DK is led from dummy. If East has the ace and covers, South has 13 tricks. If East plays low, South trumps, enters dummy via a club, ruffs a diamond, returns to dummy via a second club and ruff a third diamond. Happiness! The ace drops and there is no need to worry about the heart finesse. And what if the ace hadn't fallen? Then South would try to work out from the fall of the cards which opponent figures to have the greater length in hearts- and then play that opponent for the queen. As it happens, that wouldn't work. West has the greater heart length, but East has the queen. Go figure. In any case, it is important to look for alternative chances before banking on a finesse. Of course, it would have been much easier on everyone's nerves, if North had decided to play in 6S or if West had led a heart.

#197 Dlr: North
Vul: E-W

	North	
	S. Q52	
	H. K5	
	D. 876	
	C. AKQ52	
West		East
S. K74		S. J10986
H. 1098		H. AQJ32
D. J109543		D. -
C. J		C. 1073
	South	
	S. A3	
	H. 764	
	D. AKQ2	
	C. 9864	

North	East	South	West
1C	2C	2S	Dbl.
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: SJ

Bidding Commentary: The 2C overcall (Michaels cuebid) typically shows 5-5 in the majors with 7-11 points. (It can also show 15+ HCP, but partner assumes the minimum for the time being). South's 2S cuebid shows opening bid strength with a spade stopper. It asks partner to bid notrump with a heart stopper. West doubles 2S to make sure partner leads a spade against any eventual contract.

Defensive Commentary: West has asked for a spade lead and East obliges. East hopes North has a quick spade entry and will lead a heart through declarer's king.

Play Commentary: It's pretty clear what is going on here. Take the North seat. Judging from the double of 2S, West has the SK and will surely punch a heart through your king if he gets on lead. You, on the other hand, barring 4-0 clubs, have at least 9 tricks by simply winning the SA and cashing out: five clubs, three diamonds and the SA makes nine. So what's the prob;em? The problem in case you didn't notice is if clubs break 3-1 the clubs are blocked! If you cash the AKQ of clubs merrily playing low clubs from the dummy, the fourth round of clubs will be won in dummy. Don't look now, but you have no way back to your hand to cash the fifth club and if diamonds don't break 3-3, down you go. Misery. However, if you notice that club block. you can survive it. Unblock the 986 of clubs under the AKQ. Now when you play the C5 you can triumphantly underplay dummy's C4 and take a fifth club trick with the deuce. Standing ovation, please.

#198 Dlr: West
Vul: N-S

North
S. 432
H. AQ8
D. J65
C. KJ97

West	East
S. 1098	S. AQJ76
H. K9	H. 5432
D. 1032	D. AQ4
C. AQ1086	C. 3

South
S. K5
H. J1076
D. K987
C. 542

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1S	Pass
2S	All Pass		

Opening lead: HJ

Bidding Commentary: North is not strong enough, nor has the right shape, to make a takeout double of 2S. South has the right distribution to double 2S (short spades, plus four hearts), but is not strong enough. With another king, even a queen, South could chance a takeout double, particularly at tournament bridge where you compete like a tiger on nearly every hand.

Lead Commentary: In order to lead an honor against a suit contract, you only need the next lower honor. Against notrump the H6 is the proper lead. To lead a jack playing standard leads, the suit should be headed by the AJ10(x), KJ10(x), J109(x) or J108(x).

Play Commentary: North is marked with the AQ of hearts from the lead and as East is no rush to see North win and return a trump, East plays low from dummy.

Defensive Commentary: North, who has dummy's long club suit all bottled up, knows that this dummy is only useful good for one thing- ruffing hearts. North overtakes the HJ and leads a spade. If East ducks, South wins and returns a second spade. When East plays a second heart, North wins and plays a third spade. Declarer stands a good chance of losing seven tricks against this defense.

When South, looking at those scary clubs, sees North shift to a trump, a passive return, North is telling South (and East for that matter): "Partner don't worry about clubs, let's stop heart ruffs in dummy. Our diamond tricks aren't going anywhere. Patience.

#199 Dlr: South
Vul: Both

North
S. QJ108
H. 643
D. A832
C. J10

West	East
S. 4	S. 5
H. KJ108	H. 752
D. J765	D. KQ94
C. 8643	C. Q9752

South
S. AK97632
H. AQ9
D. 10
C. AK

South	West	North	East
2C	Pass	2D	Pass
2S	Pass	3S	Pass
4NT	Pass	5D	Dbl.
5NT	Pass	6C	Pass
6S	All Pass		

Opening lead: D5

Bidding Commentary: After South's strong, artificial 2C opening and North's 2D waiting response, the raise to 3S is constructive. With a weak supporting hand (no ace, no king, no singleton), North jumps to 4S. When North shows one ace in response to Blackwood, East is alert enough to double. The double of an artificial bid (Stayman, Transfers, Blackwood responses) is a lead directing double. At this level length is not an issue, strength in the suit is. South brushes this aside and asks for kings via 5NT. If North has one king it should be the HK given East's double of 5D. If so, South can count 13 tricks and bid 7NT.

Lead Commentary: Partner has asked for a diamond lead - give partner a diamond lead.

Play Commentary: As South, your only losers are in hearts. With losers in one suit and mucho trump on both sides, save hearts until last and think strip and endplay. The idea is to strip the minors from both hands ending in dummy **before** leading a heart. Win the DA, ruff a diamond high, enter dummy with a trump, ruff a second diamond high, back to dummy with a trump and ruff dummy's last diamond. After cashing the CAK, both minors are stripped. Return to dummy with a trump leaving one trump in each hand (a must) and lead a heart. If East plays low, insert the 9. West wins the ten but is endplayed. A heart goes into the AQ while a ruff and sluff club return fares no better. If East happens to play the H10 or HJ on the first heart play, cover gently with the queen. West wins, but the A9 take the last two heart tricks. That H9 is a huge card.

#196 Dlr: North
Vul: Neither

North
S. 92
H. K1086
D. AJ8
C. KQ74

West	East
S. AKQJ107	S. 53
H. 32	H. AQJ4
D. Q109	D. 76532
C. A5	C. 32

South
S. 864
H. 975
D. K4
C. J10986

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	3C	4S
All Pass			

Opening lead: CK

Bidding Commentary: The preempt has done its job. West must guess at 4S.

Defensive Commentary: South plays the CJ at trick one to alert partner of a club sequence headed by the jack. It may be important for North to know this. Perhaps North may want to underlead the CQ to get South in to lead another suit. One never knows.

Play Commentary: With four possible losers in the minors, this hand depends upon the heart finesse. And if the finesse works, it has to be **repeated**. If West draws trump and **then** takes the heart finesse, even though it works, West cannot get back to his hand to repeat the finesse without surrendering the lead. Once on lead, N-S can take three diamonds and a club. How much easier to take the heart finesse at trick two and **then** draw trump ending in the West hand. Now the heart finesse can be repeated safely. In order to make entry conserving plays, you must learn to project the play forward. When you have a repeatable finesse possibility, you should ask yourself: If the finesse works, do I have a convenient way of immediately returning to the facing hand to repeat the finesse? The answer here is to use a spade from dummy to get back to your hand to repeat the finesse. No law states that you have to draw trump early when you need your trump suit for communications.

*These hands are taken from Eddie Kantar's marvelous **Thinking Bridge Series***
Questions? Contact Lynn at LynnYokel@gmail.com