

These hands are taken from the wonderful THINKING BRIDGE by Eddie Kantar

Hand 71	North		
Dealer: North	S. 763		
Vul: Both	H. AK4		
	D. Q104		
	C. AQJ6		
West		East	
S. KJ92		S. 105	
H. 92		H. J10876	
D. 97652		D. AK8	
C. 107		C. 942	
	South		
	S. AQ84		
	H. Q53		
	D. J3		
	C. K853		

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	2C	Pass
2D	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: HJ

Bidding Commentary: Every hand should be this easy to bid.

Lead Commentary: At notrump suits headed by the J109 or J108 are considered 'sequence suits' and the top card is led. Suits headed by the J107x (x) or lower are not sequence suits and 4th best is led. However, if East has reason to believe that either opponent has a long running suit (not the case here), a high diamond lead is best.

Play Commentary: As North count your sure tricks. You have 8: four clubs, three hearts and the SA. If you work with spades you have a chance of developing a 9th trick if the finesse works or if the suit breaks 3-3, a little less than a 70% chance. Not bad, but it can't top a 100%! That's what you have if you develop your 9th trick in diamonds, a suit where you have to lose two tricks in any case.

Defensive Commentary: If declarer plays low from dummy at trick one, as West play the H2 to deny an honor. However, if the queen is played from dummy, play the 9, a count card. The 9 must be count because if you had an honor higher than the queen, you would have covered the queen. The bottom line is this: When third hand can't beat dummy's play of a queen or a lower card, third hand gives count.

Defensive Commentary #2 If declarer attacks spades before diamonds, West can defeat the contract by winning the SK and returning a heart. North pays the price for attacking the wrong suit first.

#72 Dlr: South
Vul: Neither

North
S. 83
H. 984
D. 109875
C. 832

West
S. A652
H. A32
D. AJ6
C. 1075

East
S. KJ104
H. KQ105
D. KQ
C. 964

South
S. Q97
H. J76
D. 432
C. AKQJ

South	West	North	East
1C	Dbl.	Pass	2C
Pass	2S	Pass	4S
All Pass			

Opening lead: C2

Bidding Commentary: East is far too strong to make a **non-forcing** jump response to a takeout double. With two four card **majors** and 10+ HCP, a cuebid is the way to begin. In response to a cuebid, both the doubler and the cuebidder bid four (or five) card suits in **ascending** order. West's 2S rebid denies four cards in either red suit and East raises to game. A raise after a cuebid is **not** forcing. In general, when raising partner, bid the limit of your hand. The one who knows, goes!

Lead Commentary: When leading partner's unsupported suit, the **lowest** card is led from three or four small cards. Had the suit been supported, the **highest** card is led from three or four small cards. However, with three or four cards headed by an **honor**, (10, J, Q or K) the lowest card is led whether or not the suit has been supported. At a trump contract holding Axx(x) the ace is led.

Defensive Commentary: South cashes three clubs and takes stock. Three aces are missing and West surely has them to justify the bidding. In addition, West knows that South needs the SQ to open the bidding. What a game! Everyone knows what everybody has, so what should South do?

Simply stated: If a defender is **absolutely** sure there are **zero** tricks coming from the side suits, try giving declarer a ruff and a sluff! It works here. North ruffs the fourth club with the S8, promoting South's Q97 to the setting trick.

This hand has been rotated for the sake of the lesson

#74 Dlr: West
Vul: N-S

North
S. -
H. AK6
D. 10432
C. J98642

West
S. AKJ7543
H. -
D. KQ8
C. AKQ

East
S. 1098
H. QJ82
D. A976
C. 103

South
S. Q62
H. 1097543
D. J5
C. 75

West	North	East	South
2C	Pass	2D	Pass
2S	Pass	3S	Pass
4C	Pass	4D	Pass
4NT	Pass	5D	Pass
7S	All Pass		

Opening lead: HK (It's a good idea to lead the king from AKx(x) when the opponents wind up at the 5 or 6 level. Why? At the 5 or 6 level one often wants to lead an ace without the king!)

Bidding Commentary: This is a bidding problem for East-West. Once West receives spade support, West must discover if East has the DA for a grand. An immediate 4NT Blackwood is not the answer. If East shows one ace, which one is it? Using Blackwood with a void (unless the Blackwood bidder has three aces) is a no win proposition. Cuebidding is better. After East raises to 3S, West cuebids 4C and East cuebids 4D. Now it is safe for West to check for aces. After all, if East has two, West can count 13 tricks and can bid 7NT at tournament bridge. If East has one ace, at least West knows which one it is.

Defensive Commentary: North should **not** double 7S. Why would a sane West jump to a grand slam knowing an ace is missing unless West is void in hearts?

Play Commentary: West trumps the opening lead and plays the SA. When North shows out, West must get to dummy to take the proven spade finesse. There are two possible dummy entries: the DA, and a third round club ruff. The DA is safer. If South were void in diamonds, South would (should) have doubled 7S alerting partner to some void. Once in dummy with the DA, the spade is finessed, trumps drawn and the grand slam claimed. If West tries to get to dummy by ruffing a club, don't ask.

#77 Dlr: North
Vul: Both

North
S. AJ32
H. Q5
D. KQ8
C. AQJ7

West
S. 86
H. 108742
D. J109
C. 853

East
S. 4
H. KJ96
D. 6543
C. K942

South
S. KQ10975
H. A3
D. A72
C. 106

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	1S	Pass
4S	Pass	4NT	Pass
5H	Dbf.	5NT	Pass
6D	Pass	6S	All Pass

Opening lead: H 4

Bidding Commentary: The leap to 4S with a 4-4-3-2 pattern, including four card support, shows 18-19 HCP, the same count as a jump to 2NT would. It is a **very** strong rebid. Not a shutout by any means. East doubles the 5H Blackwood response asking for a heart lead against **any** eventual contract. A must do lead-directing double for all serious players. Undaunted, South tries for a grand by bidding 5NT and signs off in 6S not knowing which minor suit king responder has. Opener assumes East has the HK given the double.

Lead Commentary: Without the double West leads the DJ and making 6S is easy. Declarer sets up the clubs for a heart discard. .

Play Commentary: With the HK marked with East, South does best to play low from dummy and win the ace intending to use the HQ as a later throw-in card. South draws trump, strips diamonds and exits a heart to the queen and king. East is fixed. A heart return is a ruff and a sluff while a club return goes into "Jaws" (the AQJ). Either way it's all over but the shouting.

An equally divided side suit (hearts) can often be used as a throw-in suit to force a favorable return. However, the side suits must be stripped, the opponents' trump drawn, and at least one trump must remain in each hand before the 'grand exit' in the evenly divided suit.

#78 Dlr: West
Vul: Both

	North	
	S. K103	
	H. J9842	
	D. 752	
	C. J3	
West		East
S. A64		S. Q82
H. K103		H. 75
D. QJ6		D. A10943
C. AQ74		C. K52
	South	
	S. J975	
	H. AQ6	
	D. K8	
	C. 10986	

West	North	East	South
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: H4

Bidding Commentary: East's hand is worth 10 points. A five card suit headed by two honors (not to mention the 9) is worth one extra point, minimum.

Defensive Commentary: When dummy has small cards and partner has led from length, third hand is expected to play high - unless the highest card has an equal(s) such as the QJ (x), the J10 (x) or the 1098 (x). In each case the **lower** or **lowest** equal is played. However, there is an exception, a huge exception - when third hand has AQx.

With AQx, the proper third hand play is the **queen** not the ace. Why? If partner has the king, it doesn't matter which honor is played. If the queen holds, South plays ace and another. It is when **declarer** has the king that it matters. If South plays the ace and queen, declarer holds up, wins the third round heart and finesses diamonds into South, the non-danger hand. After South wins the king he is 'heartless' and West has nine tricks: 4 diamonds, 3 clubs, 1 heart and 1 spade.

If the HQ is played at trick one, West will fear holding up (wouldn't you?) lest North has led from the AJxx(x) in which case the defense will rattle off the first four or five heart tricks. Say declarer takes the king at trick one, the normal play, and runs the DQ. South wins and plays the ace and heart. The defenders take four hearts and a diamond. Down one. Do not forget this exception and don't make obvious signs of suffering by trying to remember what teacher said before playing the queen! The play works particularly well when third hand has a side suit entry.

#80 Dlr: North
Vul: East-West

	North	
	S. 97	
	H. AQ72	
	D. AKJ10	
	C. 653	
West		East
S. Q10862		S. AKJ
H. K4		H. 98
D. 954		D. 8632
C. AQ10		C. 8742
	South	
	S. 543	
	H. J10653	
	D. Q7	
	C. KJ9	

North	East	South	West
1D	Pass	1H	1S
2H	2S	Pass	Pass
3H	All Pass		

Opening lead: S6

Bidding Commentary: North is not strong enough to jump to 3H directly. If a 4-4-3-2 hand pattern is not strong enough to open 1NT, it is **not** strong enough to make a jump raise. However, North **is** strong enough to compete to the three level. West, assuming an eight card spade fit, is too balanced to compete to 3S. Hands with nine card fits are far more apt to compete to the three level.

Lead Commentary: Some lead fourth best from length against both suit and no trump contracts. Others lead fourth best against notrump, but low from an odd number and high-low from an even number of cards against suit contracts. It pays to find out the opponents' lead conventions. Not everyone plays as you do!

Defensive Commentary: When East sees those threatening diamonds, **five** black suit tricks may be needed. Translation: East may have to lead clubs **twice** through declarer as partner can't have the C AK not having led the suit. Rather than cashing two spades, East does better to win the SK (lower equal) and shift to a high club, denying an honor. After West wins and returns a spade to East's ace, East returns a second club. With this inspired defense, the first five tricks belong to East-West.

When dummy comes down with a threatening side suit, an **attacking** defense is called for so conserve one's limited entries in one suit to be able to lead another suit twice.

Questions? Contact Lynn Yokel at LynnYokel@gmail.com