

#21 Dir: South  
Vul: Neither

	North	
	S. AQ953	
	H. K64	
	D. A4	
	C. 1053	
West		East
S. 108		S. KJ72
H. Q983		H. J752
D. K862		D. 75
C. KQ7		C. A92
	South	
	S. 64	
	H. A10	
	D. QJ1093	
	C. J864	

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

Opening lead: H3

Bidding Commentary: South is not strong enough to respond 2D. A two level response by a passed hand typically shows a five card suit (no Weak Two opening) with 10-11 HCP. After the 1NT response, North has no place to go. South figures to have no more than two spades (didn't raise) and rebidding 2S hints of a death wish. 1NT is often the best contract on indifferent hands especially when you don't have to play them!

Lead Commentary: With a choice of two relatively equal strength 4 card suits, a major and a minor, lean toward the major. Opponents are more likely to hold concealed minor suit length.

Play Commentary: Before playing to trick one, declarer counts sure tricks. He has four: the AK of hearts, the DA and the SA. Then declarer decides which suit to establish for the extra needed tricks. Here it is a slam dunk to work with diamonds for three extra tricks. Diamonds are far stronger than spades, but there is another little problem - entries. When establishing a long suit in the **weaker** hand, there must be a **return** entry to that hand once the suit is established. The opening lead must be won in **dummy** (key play) and diamonds cleared by unblocking the DA (high honor from the doubleton side) and continuing the suit until the king is driven out. With the HA still in the closed hand, South must take four diamonds, two hearts and the SA.

Defensive Commentary: If South wins the opening lead in the closed hand and leads the DQ or starts on spades, neither play should be admitted in public. If West covers the DQ looking at Ax in dummy, that is another play to be forever forgotten.

#22 Dir: East  
Vul: N-S

	North	
	S. 4	
	H. AJ8	
	D. 653	
	C. Q108543	
West		East
S. J108		S. KQ976
H. Q74		H. 103
D. AKJ92		D. QT8
C. 76		C. AK7
	South	
	S. A532	
	H. K9652	
	D. 74	
	C. 92	

East	South	West	North
1S	Pass	2D	Pass
3D	Pass	3S	Pass
4S	All Pass		

Opening lead: H5

Bidding Commentary: The 3S bid, delayed support at the three level, shows an invitational hand. Opener with a good 14 should push on to 4S. Playing '2 over 1' as game forcing, the bidding would be: 1S-1NT (forcing), 2C-3S, 4S. The hand is not strong enough to force to game with an original 2D diamond response. East, forced to bid over 1NT and lacking a four card side suit or six spades, rebids the cheaper three card minor. The leap to 3S is not forcing and shows 3 spades with 10-11 HCP. Diamonds are never mentioned.

Lead Commentary: Holding four trump to an honor and no singleton, it is usually right to lead from a 'lump' (one's longest side suit). The idea is to try to force declarer to trump, thus reducing declarer's trump length. If South can arrange to wind up with more trump than East, it's goodbye East.

Defensive Commentary: When dummy plays low at trick one, North plays the **jack**. When dummy has an honor and third hand has a higher and a lower honor, the **lower** honor is inserted. North, aware that South has four trump, continues with the ace and a heart forcing East to ruff, the game plan. East and South each have four spades. When East attacks trump, South wins the **third** round, the one that **voids** dummy, and plays a fourth heart forcing East to ruff. Don't look now, but South remains with a trump and a good heart and East has no more spades! Down two! If South wins an earlier spade and plays a heart, **dummy** takes the force and declarer has enough trumps to draw trump and run the diamonds. When trying to force the long hand to trump a suit in which **both** declarer and dummy are void (hearts), take your trump winner when dummy's **last** trump is played - providing you still have a small trump left.

#23 Dir: North  
Vul: Neither

	North	
	S. A94	
	H. 64	
	D. AKQ64	
	C. Q86	
West		East
S. 8753		S. J62
H. AKJ		H. 983
D. 873		D. 95
C. K73		C. A9542
	South	
	S. KQ10	
	H. Q10752	
	D. J102	
	C. J10	

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

Opening lead: C4

Bidding Commentary: South transfers to hearts then rebids 3NT showing 9/10-14 HCP along with five hearts, balanced. The presence of four tens must be worth at least one extra point! North, holding a doubleton heart, passes. With three hearts opener usually converts to 4H. However, opener may opt to pass 3NT with a 4-3-3-3 pattern holding stoppers in the other three suits.

Defensive Commentary: West plays the CK at trick one (denying the queen) which holds. If West woodenly returns the C7 (higher of two remaining cards), East's correct play is to duck. By ducking, East preserves communication for the defense. If West can get in soon, a total of four club tricks can be taken. Even though ducking is the right play, it doesn't work here. North races off nine tricks: 5 diamonds, 3 spades and a club. But the real culprit is West. Before returning a club, West should play the HK, inferring the AKJ. Now East should win the CA and return a heart allowing the defenders to take the first five tricks.

The best defenders are the most thoughtful ones. When they can 'see' the best defense, they are supposed to let partner in on the secret.

When third hand plays high (CK), third hand denies the card directly beneath the one played (CQ).

When returning partner's suit with two cards remaining, return the higher, but with three cards remaining, return the lowest.

#29 Dir: North  
Vul: Both

	North	
	S. J1087	
	H. K52	
	D. J832	
	C. A8	
West		East
S. A532		S. K4
H. A3		H. Q1064
D. AKQ		D. 10765
C. 9764		C. J32
	South	
	S. Q96	
	H. J987	
	D. 94	
	C. KQ105	

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
All Pass			

Opening lead: SJ

Bidding Commentary: East is not strong enough to use Stayman, a response which normally requires at least 8+ HCP.

Lead Commentary: At notrump, suits headed by the J109 and J108 are 'sequence' suits and the top card is led. Fourth best is led from suits headed by the J107x or weaker.

Play Commentary: West starts with six sure tricks with a good chance for a seventh in diamonds if the suit breaks 3-3 or the jack drops. There is also a chance for an extra trick in hearts. The key is to keep a **later** dummy entry so these possible tricks can be reached. West wins the SA (key play) and cashes the DAKQ. When the jack does not drop, West falls back on plan B, playing the ace and a heart hoping to develop a seventh trick in that suit.

Defensive Commentary: South signals with the S9 at trick one to show an honor. On the third diamond, South can afford to discard a heart. Declarer cannot have the AK of hearts. Why? Declarer has already shown up with 13 HCP: the SA and the DAKQ. Furthermore, if declarer has one heart honor, North has the CA.

Defensive Commentary #2: When declarer plays the ace and a heart, second hand must play **low** without a care in the world. Partner is marked with the HJ ( declarer has turned up with 17 HCP), and playing low gives declarer a chance to misguess and play the 10. A defender holding Kxx(x) should be ready to play low smoothly when dummy to the left has Q10x(x) and declarer attacks the suit by leading low or ace and low.

#30 Dir: North  
Vul: Both

	North	
	S. AK	
	H. A95	
	D. AJ5	
	C. AQ1062	
West		East
S. Q98		S. 10732
H. K106		H. Q873
D. K106		D. Q432
C. J973		C. 8
	South	
	S. J654	
	H. J42	
	D. 987	
	C. K54	

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

Opening lead: H3

Bidding Commentary: An artificial 2C opening followed by a 2NT rebid shows 22-24 HCP and is not forcing. In fact, the North hand should be evaluated at 23 points by virtue of a five card suit headed by three honors. South correctly raises to 3NT bypassing Stayman with a 4-3-3-3 pattern.

Lead Commentary: In general it is safer to lead from a major rather than a minor suit with relatively equal length and strength; minor suits are often concealed during the bidding, but major suits seldom are. Hearts are stronger than spades, so a heart is the preferred choice.

Play Commentary: With this heart combination, declarer plays **low** from dummy hoping East has led from the Q10xx or the K10xx. If so, West has to play a high honor to prevent North from taking a trick with the 9. Once West plays a high honor, dummy's jack is a likely second trick.

Defensive Commentary: When dummy plays low at trick one, West plays the H10. When third hand has a higher and a lower honor than dummy, the **lower** honor is inserted.

Play Commentary #2: North needs **5** club tricks. No problem if the suit divides 3-2, but what if they are 4-1? When playing a 5-3 (or a 4-3) fit, the AK, AQ, or KQ along with the 10 or 9 in the hand with the greater length (the **long** hand), facing Axx, Kxx or Qxx in the short hand, begin with **a high honor from the long hand**. Then cross to the remaining honor doubleton in the short hand. If second hand shows out, you will be in the proper hand to take the marked finesse.

#25 Dir: South  
Vul: Neither

North  
S. 107643  
H. K5  
D. AQ93  
C. 86

West  
S. Q85  
H. 984  
D. 1062  
C. Q1042

East  
S. AJ92  
H. J76  
D. 87  
C. A953

South  
S. K  
H. AQ1032  
D. KJ54  
C. KJ7

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

Opening lead: C2 (fourth best)

Bidding Commentary: North's raise to 3D is invitational, showing at least four diamonds and 9-11 HCP. South has more than enough to accept and makes the obvious 3NT rebid.

Lead Commentary: West makes the normal lead of the C2, the unbid suit. At this point both East and South know that West started with four clubs presumably headed by an honor or two. At notrump, the lead of a low card in an unbid suit promises strength.

Defensive Commentary: East is destined to be the hero or the goat! East knows (or should know) from the bidding that South has five hearts and four diamonds. East also knows from partner's lead that South has three clubs. Ergo, South has a singleton spade! No matter what spade that is, East-West can scoop up four spade tricks if East bangs down the ace and then leads a low spade. Four spades and the CA spell a one trick defeat. If East returns a club, South can take 10 tricks if he goes up with the king and runs the red suits.

Defensive Commentary #2: What about returning partner's suit? Well, it's usually a good idea, but when one can see defeating the contract by shifting, **shift!**

Defenders use the bidding to count declarer's hand. In addition, the opening lead may be so revealing that third hand will have a complete count at trick one! It's not magic. It's counting! You can do it!

***These hands are taken from Eddie Kantar's wonderful "Thinking Bridge" Series***  
**Questions? Contact Lynn at: [LynnYokel@gmail.com](mailto:LynnYokel@gmail.com)**