

Halloween at Palo Alto

Dealer: North
Vul: Both

North		
S. 763		
H. AK4		
D. Q104		
C. AQJ6		
West		East
S. KJ98		S. 105
H. 92		H. J10876
D. 97652		D. AK8
C. 107		C. 942
	South	
	S. AQ42	
	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.

Dlr: North

Vul: E-W

This hand has been rotated 90 degrees for the lesson (East held the N hand)

North
S. KQ6
H. KQ9
D. A854
C. K63

West
S. A1097
H. J65
D. 32
C. 10872

East
S. J832
H. A10742
D. K9
C. 94

South
S. 54
H. 83
D. QJ1076
C. AQJ5

North	East	South	West
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: H4

Bidding Commentary: In response to a 1NT opening, responder should treat non-slamish hands with 5-4 in the minors with two doubletons as balanced, and respond accordingly.

Defensive Commentary: West plays the HJ at trick one, third hand high denying the 10, but not the queen. With QJx, the correct third hand play is the jack.

Play Commentary: North knows from the play of the jack that East has the A10 because the jack has denied **both** of those honors. In order to muddy the waters and leave East in doubt as to who has the queen, North takes the trick with the king, the higher equal, **a must-do**, crosses to the CQ and runs the DQ into East.

Defensive Commentary #2: On lead with the DK, East can count nine quick tricks for the bad guys: four clubs, four diamonds and a heart. Defensive tricks must be cashed **now!** The problem is that East does **not** know who has the HQ. If West has it, a low heart should be led. If North has the guarded queen, East must be put in with a projected SA to lead a heart. If East decides to play North for the HQ, East leads a **high** spade, showing weakness in spades, logically asking for a heart return. A low spade, on the other hand, shows spade strength and asks for a spade return. Are you having fun? West wins the SA and fires the H6 through North. East-West take six tricks. Any other defense and declarer makes the contract easily. How much easier the defense would be for East if North takes the first trick with the queen. Do not be a friendly declarer. With two equal cards take the trick with the higher equal.

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.

Dlr: North

	North	
	S. J765	
	H. 6	
	D. A843	
	C. Q1072	
West		East
S. K4		S. Q1032
H. AQ9832		H. KJ10
D. 76		D. QJ10
C. AK8	South	C. 654
	S. A98	
	H. 754	
	D. K952	
	C. J93	

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	Pass	1H
Pass	2H	Pass	4H
All Pass			

Opening lead: C2

Bidding Commentary: North has the ideal distribution for a passed hand takeout double, but lacks the necessary minimum strength, 8-9 HCP. East is better placed to raise hearts immediately as opposed to responding 1S. If East responds 1S and then prefers hearts at the two level (say West rebids 2C or 2D) East shows a **doubleton** heart. A good rule of thumb is to support partner's major suit opening bid directly with three card support and 7-10 support points.

Lead Commentary: Singleton trump leads as well as unsupported aces (excluding Ax with trump control) can be costly leads. Look elsewhere, like a spade or a club. With a choice of two unbid suits, tend to lead from the stronger, but not from one headed by an unsupported ace. In this case clubs are headed by 2 honors and spades by only one.

Play Commentary: West has four losers: one club, two diamonds and one spade. The spade and diamond losers are 'fast' losers, losers that can be taken any time the opponents get in. The club loser is 'slow', a loser that cannot be taken immediately. Declarer does not have time to work with diamonds which means letting the opponents in **twice**. Before the declarer can set up a diamond winner, the opponents can set up a club winner. However, with a trump lead, declarer has time to set up a diamond winner for a club pitch. Clearly, declarer must work with spades to try to discard a club. Best is to cross to a trump at trick two and lead a spade to the king. If it holds, a spade is led to the 10 hoping it drives out the ace. It does! If the king loses to the ace, declarer wins the club return and leads a spade to the ten hoping North has the jack. He does! After drawing trump the losing club goes on the SQ. You play so beautifully.

These hands are from Eddie Kantar's "Thinking Bridge Series"
Questions? Contact Lynnyokel@gmail.com