

# January 2016

This month I am back on BBO sitting North and playing with the boys from the Cape

## Bidding

Dealer North. Both vul

N	E	S	W
1S	2D	2S	pass
2NT(1)	pass	3S(2)	pass
4S(3)			

- (1) N-S are playing a convention whereby a short suit try for game can be made. South will respond 3C to this bid after which North will show his short suit.
- (2) South has forgotten we play this convention
- (3) A win win situation for North. If I pass and we make 4 then it's my partner's fault, and if I bid 4 and we go down it's also my partner's fault.

You're sitting West and your partner leads the ♥2. You are playing 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> leads against suit contracts. You put up your queen and declarer wins with his ace. Plan your defence.

## West

♠ 64  
♥ KQ54  
♦ 72  
♣ QJ972

## South

♠ 10987  
♥ 1093  
♦ KJ85  
♣ 83

## Initial Analysis

A message I have repeated again and again in these articles is that it is never too early to plan your defence. This hand is a case in point. We already know a good deal about declarer's hand. He has at least 5 Spades. If your partner is leading a singleton heart then your defence is easy – you haven't got one, and unless your partner has bid 2D with a five card heart suit in his hand as well, he most certainly started with three hearts. Declarer alerted the 2NT bid so he is short in a suit. This is certainly diamonds and will be no more than a singleton. The dummy couldn't be worse for him so there is a good chance he is going down. Let's make sure he does. But it's all up to you and whether you have done your homework before playing to the next trick.

## Final Analysis

We have seen this situation before and it will come up again and again. If it were permissible for your partner to lean across the table and ask you one simple question, what would it be? Yes, exactly! Partner, do you have the ♥K? Your first responsibility on this hand is to answer that question, and you answer that question by giving a Smith peter in the next suit played. You are expecting declarer to draw trumps so get ready to peter, but instead he plays the ♦3 towards dummy. There is no rule that says you can only use a Smith peter when declarer plays his longest and strongest suit, you can also use Smith peters when he plays his weakest and bleakest suit. Your partner doesn't need to know how many diamonds you started with, he knows that already. So you drop your ♦7 on partner's ace, the start of a peter telling him you have the ♥K. He cashes his ♥J and plays a third Heart to your King. You switch to the club queen, king, ace and a club back to your jack. Having already taken five tricks you are in the enviable position of deciding how best to get a sixth? Did declarer start with 6-3-1-3 shape in which case a heart works best but partner needs to hold the singleton K or Q of spades? Or does declarer hold a 5-3-1-4 shape in which case a club is best if partner holds a doubleton headed by any honour? You decide on a club return and the contract drifts 3 off. But that was in your dreams. Let's see what happened at the table and now you are sitting East.

### East

♠ J5  
♥ J62  
♦ AQ10964  
♣ A5

### South

♠ 10987  
♥ 1093  
♦ KJ85  
♣ 83

You lead the ♥2 and partner plays the queen which loses to the ace. Declarer leads a small diamond towards dummy and you go up with the ace. You don't play Smith peters so when your partner drops the 7 he is simply confirming what you already know, that he started with a doubleton. What to do now? Declarer can't get into dummy immediately to discard a loser from his hand or to attack clubs. If you switch to a spade this could be wrong if partner holds the A or K. If declarer holds the ♥K a heart continuation will be a disaster. A diamond is out of the question. This leaves clubs. This will only cost a trick in the suit if partner holds specifically QJ. To take this contract down it seems your partner must hold one of the side suit kings but if we dally declarer may be able to ditch a loser on the ♦K. It's 50-50 which king partner holds, but playing ♣A is far more appealing because if partner does hold the king in this suit a third club from him will take this contract off. In fact if this proves to be the case, what a glorious victory this would be, the kind of attack that deserves an article written about it (well, East got that bit right). I suspect that similar thoughts must have gone through Lord Cardigan's mind when he ordered the charge of the Light Brigade. And so East played the ace of clubs. In another article I said that the alarm clock signal was so rare I could never remember seeing it played at the table. I didn't see it here either but it occurs to me that had West dropped the queen of clubs under the ace East would have got the message and switched back to hearts. Instead he played another club and it was all over for the defence as declarer rolled in ten tricks.

## Full Deal

N

♠ AKQ32  
♥ A87  
♦ 3  
♣ K1064

W

♠ 64  
♥ KQ54  
♦ 72  
♣ QJ972

E

♠ J5  
♥ J62  
♦ AQ10964  
♣ A5

S

♠ 10987  
♥ 1093  
♦ KJ85  
♣ 83

## Conclusion

Most of us know how to give count in defence, either standard high low showing an even number or upside down where high low shows an odd number. But there are certain situations in bridge where your partner needs to know something a little more important than how many cards you have in a suit. The Smith peter is a convention that comes up often and something very worthwhile adding to your armoury.