

May 2017

With the vague hope that it might improve my French I am watching a practice match of four French experts

Bidding

Dealer South
No one vulnerable

West	S	W	N	E
♠ 8764	1S	pass	2C	pass
♥ K8632	2D	pass	3C	pass
♦ 986	3NT	all pass		
♣ 9				

West leads the ♥3 and dummy goes down.

North

♠ Q5
♥ 97
♦ A73
♣ AJ10875

East inserts the queen which holds the trick and returns the ten to the jack and king. What card do you play next?

Initial Analysis

There seems no way of taking this contract off, rather we might be wondering how many overtricks declarer can make? So we do what the West player did, we play another heart because that is the automatic play and requires little thought on our part (I warned you about this in earlier articles but you didn't take any notice did you?)

It's true that most of the time declarer will make his contract whatever you do and switching suits now might simply let him making an overtrick that a passive defence would have avoided. On the other hand as your partner is the only person who might make additional defensive tricks, knocking out his only safe exit card might not be a good thing. Let's start with declarer's distribution. He almost certainly has a 5-3-4-1 hand. Thinking about this hand is not so difficult because the only suit of real interest is the

club suit. Your ♣9 is a worry because if declarer needs to set up tricks in this suit even though your partner probably holds the ♣K and ♣Q this will be really easy to do. If he doesn't need tricks in this suit then a club switch will at best reduce his overtricks. If he does need to establish tricks in this suit, why help him? Spades are going to behave well for declarer, so by elimination that leaves the diamond suit. You're not holding your breath, but you switch to the ♦9

Here is the full hand

North	
♠ Q5	
♥ 97	
♦ A73	
♣ AJ10875	
West	East
♠ 8763	♠ A10
♥ K8632	♥ Q104
♦ 986	♦ K1042
♣ 9	♣ K832
South	
♠ KJ942	
♥ AJ5	
♦ QJ5	
♣ Q6	

Conclusion

What can I say? That's how the bidding went so they clearly do things differently in France. But it should be clear to you that with you partner sitting with all the key cards, leading another heart will do nothing to help him defeat this contract and a switch might be necessary.