

May 2018

I'm falling behind with my columns so once again I wander off to BBO in search of inspiration. There I stumble across an expert table where all the players are Polish. The Poles sat opposite each other so the table held a certain magnetism for me. Here is the first hand I watched.

Bidding

Dealer West

All vul

South	W	N	E	S
♠ A8532	1NT(1)pass		2C(2)	pass
♥ QJ106	2D (3) pass		2NT(4)	pass
♦ 54			3NT(5)	all pass
♣ 105				

The bidding looks straightforward but these guys are playing a Polish Club system so a little explanation might clarify certain bids. First of all you have to understand that the Poles like to play nearly all hands at game level or beyond irrespective of point count or distribution.

- 1) Partner I am not strong enough to open 3NT on my own. I probably have 15-17 points and a balanced hand but I might have upgraded a good looking 14 point hand, or even a 13 point hand if I'm in the mood.
- 2) Have you opened this hand with a 4 card major or perhaps a 5 or 6 card major?
- 3) No
- 4) Forcing to 3NT
- 5) Sign off, but please carry on partner if you feel like it

Partner leads the ♣3 (2nd and 4th leads) and dummy goes down with

East

♠ QJ6
♥ K732
♦ K873
♣ 97

South

♠ A8532
♥ QJ106
♦ 54
♣ 105

Declarer plays low from dummy, and you insert the ♣10 which to your amazement wins the trick when Declarer plays the ♣4.

Plan your play.

Initial Analysis

Let's face it – you didn't stop and plan your play at this point, the ♣5 was out of your hand faster than a jackrabbit. This hand has all the makings of a hand where you can plan your defence much later in the game. In fact with a bit of luck you won't have to plan your defence at all, Declarer making the contract or going off under his own steam. But at the table the player sitting South didn't rush to play a card at trick 2; he was thinking. So let's take some time out and do some thinking too. We know a lot more about this hand than we realize.

- 1) Declarer has denied having a 4 card major.
- 2) Unless Declarer is playing a really deep game the ♣2 is with partner so Declarer started with exactly 4 clubs.
- 3) Therefore he has at least 3 and possibly 4 diamonds.
- 4) Does partner hold the top 4 honours in clubs? Certainly not. Can he hold 3 of the top honours? Again the answer is no as this is not consistent with the play so far – for example if he has chosen to lead a small card from AKJ would declarer really refuse to take the first trick with the queen? The same argument holds true when eliminating the possibility that partner led from one or no honours in the suit. Therefore my dear Watson we deduce that both declarer and partner started with 2 honours in the club suit. Do we know who holds which honours? I think so. The only two honours declarer can hold consistent with his play are the ace and king. So this is my Bols tip (not that I will ever be asked) – when partner leads a small card around to your 10 and you hold the trick, Declarer holds the ace and king.
- 5) Finally let's count the points. You can see 16 points. Let's keep this simple and assume Declarer is maximum for his bid and holds 17 of the missing points. This leaves your partner with 7 points, 3 of them in the club suit. So he has another 4

points somewhere. If this is the ♠K and ♦J you could try a low spade now in the hope of setting up spade tricks. But for this to work partner needs to hold 3 spades in his hand in which case declarer has only 2 spades and thus 4 diamonds in which case he will make 9 tricks before you can make 5 tricks. On the other hand if partner holds the ♥A this contract is doomed on a heart return. Having reached this conclusion it is important that you resist leading the ♥Q from hand as this would prove fatal to the defence if partner held the ace doubleton in hearts. After overtaking your queen and returning a heart declarer would simply duck this in dummy and that would be the last heart trick you take. The correct card to lead is the ♥6.

The full hand

	East	
	♠ QJ6	
	♥ K732	
	♦ K873	
	♣ 97	
North		South
♠ 94		♠ A8532
♥ A54		♥ QJ106
♦ J102		♦ 54
♣ QJ832		♣ 105
	West	
	♠ K107	
	♥ 98	
	♦ AQ96	
	♣ AK64	

Final Analysis

At the table East returned the ♥6 and Declarer was held to 8 tricks. A very pretty and well thought out defence I think you will agree. Note that if East had returned a club at trick 2 West now has no problem winding up 9 tricks. Double dummy the contract could always be made once North had failed to find the heart lead.

