

THINKING BRIDGE

By Eddie Kantar

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Dir: South Vul: E-W	NORTH ♠ A 3 ♥ 7 6 4 ♦ A K Q 2 ♣ 9 8 6 4		West	North	East	South
						1 Club
			2 Club	2 Spade	X	2 NT
			Pass	3 NT	All Pass	
WEST ♠ J 10 9 8 6 ♥ A Q J 3 2 ♦ - ♣ 10 7 3		EAST ♠ K 7 4 ♥ 10 9 8 ♦ J 10 9 5 4 3 ♣ J	Opening Lead = ♠J.			
	SOUTH ♠ Q 5 2 ♥ K 5 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ A K Q 5 2					

Bidding commentary: The 2♣ overcall (Michaels cuebid) typically shows 5-5 in the majors with 7-11 high-card points. It can also show 15+ HCP, but partner assumes the minimum for the time being. North's 2♠ cuebid shows opening-bid strength with a spade stopper. It asks partner to bid notrump with a heart stopper. East doubles 2♠ to make sure partner leads a spade against any eventual contract.

Defensive commentary: East has asked for a spade lead and West obliges. West hopes East has a quick spade entry and will lead a heart through declarer's king.

Play commentary: It's pretty clear what is going on here. Take the South seat. Judging from the double of 2♠, East has the ♠K and will surely punch a heart through your king if he gets on lead. You, on the other hand, barring 4-0 clubs, have at least nine tricks by simply winning the ♠A and cashing out: five clubs, three diamonds and the ♠A makes nine.

So what's the problem? The problem, in case you didn't notice, is if clubs break 3-1 the clubs are blocked! If you cash the ♣A K Q, merrily playing low clubs from the dummy, the fourth round of clubs will be won by North. Don't look now, but you have no way back to your hand to cash the fifth club, and if diamonds don't break 3-3, down you go. Misery.

If you notice that club block. you can survive it. Unblock the ♣9, ♣8 and ♣6 under the ace, king and queen. Now when you play the ♣5, you can triumphantly underplay dummy's 4 and take a fifth club trick with the 2.

Standing ovation, please.