

**THINKING BRIDGE** -- By Eddie Kantar  
(From - NABC -Spring-2012 - Memphis-4)

Dir: East Vul: Neither	NORTH ♠ 7 6 2 ♥ A 8 7 2 ♦ Q 5 3 ♣ K J 5		West	North	East	South
			--	--	Pass	1 NT
			Pass	3 NT	All Pass	
WEST ♠ J 10 9 5 4 ♥ Q J 6 ♦ A 7 2 ♣ 9 6		EAST ♠ K 8 ♥ 10 9 3 ♦ K 4 ♣ 10 8 7 4 3 2	Opening Lead = ♠J			
	SOUTH ♠ A Q 3 ♥ K 5 4 ♦ J 10 9 8 6 ♣ A Q					

**Bidding commentary:** North opts correctly, in my opinion, not to use Stayman with this distribution.

**Lead commentary:** What else?

**Defensive commentary:** As East, play the ♠K at trick one for two reasons: (1) to unblock the suit for partner's greater length; (2) partner might be leading from an A-J-10 combination, in which case you may be able to take the first five spade tricks!

**General Third Hand Rule to Live By:** When partner leads an honor card and third hand has a doubleton honor, it is almost always right either to overtake or unblock the honor. In other words, play it!

**Play commentary:** As South, you have two stoppers in the suit they have and two high cards to drive out before your suit is established – the ♦A K. This scenario calls for a first-round holdup play. Look at the hand closely to see why. If you win the first spade and lead a diamond, East wins and returns the ♠8. Now it is too late to hold up. West overtakes, clears spades and eventually gets in with the ♦A to cash the setting tricks in spades. You lose three spades and two diamonds.

Now back up to trick one and duck the ♠K, win the spade return and lead a high diamond. If East wins, guess what? East has no spade to return and you have time to drive out the ♦A while you have another spade stopper. If West wins the first diamond and clears spades, East has no spade to lead when on lead with the ♦K.

**Words to live by:** As declarer, when holding two stoppers in the suit they lead and two high cards to drive out (say two aces or perhaps an ace and a king in the same suit), duck the first trick, win the second and drive out one of the missing high cards. If either opponent started with a doubleton in their suit and the two entries are split, you are home.