

THINKING BRIDGE

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

Bidding commentary: Routine – if you go along with “No Stayman with a 4-3-3-3 hand pattern.” Most top players abandon Stayman with this distribution.

Defensive commentary: As East, when partner leads the queen and you have K-x or A-x , overtake and return the suit to drive out declarer’s lone stopper without blocking the suit. If you do that, partner can clear hearts keeping the ♣A as the entry to the established hearts.

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Play commentary: As South, assuming East plays the ♥K at trick one (indicating shortness), duck the first heart, win the second and lead the ♣J! Why? You have eight tricks outside of clubs and need at least one club trick to make the contract. If West has the ♣A plus a likely five-card heart suit, you are a dead man walking. Alternatively, if East has the ♣A, you can’t lose the hand. The reason for leading the jack is that it looks for all the world like you are taking a finesse. If West is taken in by this little piece of skullduggery and ducks, you have stolen your ninth trick!

Defensive commentary #2: As West, assuming South wins the second or third heart and leads the ♣J, don’t be greedy! Take the money (the setting tricks) and run. If you stop to work it out, partner can’t have the ♣Q! Dummy has 13 HCP and declarer has 15-17, so assume 16. This means the opponents have 29 HCP give or take one point.

Your side has 11 HCP give or take a point. You have 8 HCP and partner has shown 3 with the ♥K for 11. So guess who has the ♣Q? Good thinking – they do. Nonetheless, leading the jack from the Q-J towards the king in dummy is a neat way to hypnotize second hand into ducking with the ace. You are becoming so tricky