

THINKING BRIDGE

By Eddie Kantar

Card combinations Part 3

(From - NABC Summer 2010 New Orleans -L A - U S A)

	NORTH ♠ A Q J ♥ 6 5 ♦ K J 9 8 ♣ K 6 3 2		West	North	East	South
						1 Spade
			Pass	1 Diamond	Pass	1 NT
			Pass	3 NT	All Pass	
WEST ♠ 9 2 ♥ J 7 4 3 2 ♦ 7 6 5 ♣ Q 10 4		EAST ♠ K 8 7 4 ♥ A Q 8 ♦ 10 4 3 ♣ J 7 5	Opening lead: ♥3.			
	SOUTH ♠ 10 6 5 3 ♥ K 10 9 ♦ A Q 2 ♣ A 9 8					

Bidding commentary: Routine. North is not strong enough to try for slam and there is no point in showing club support with a balanced hand facing a balanced hand. South's pattern and poor spade suit make 1NT a better second bid than 1♠.

Defensive Commentary: This heart combination is one to recognize. It is one of the few times that third hand does not play high when partner leads low versus No-trump, and dummy has low cards. The play of the queen is a far better play than the ace. If partner has the king it doesn't make any difference which one you play, but if declarer has the king, he dare not duck for fear the lead was from the A-J. If you play the ace and then the queen, declarer can hold up and now when you get in with the ♠K, you (East) will be heartless and partner's two winning hearts go to bed. Instead of going down one, declarer winds up with an overtrick.

An advanced spinoff of this play is when as third hand you have A-J-x with an outside entry and know partner has led from a five-card suit perhaps headed by the queen. If you play ace-jack, declarer holds up and when you get in with your side's only side-suit entry, you won't have any more cards in partner's suit to return.

Bummer. But if you play the jack and declarer wins the king, fearing partner has led from the A-Q, you take four more tricks when you get in. The play also works if declarer has Q-10-x and partner has K-x-x-x-x. If you play the ace and then the jack, covered by the queen, partner won't know who has the 10 and is likely to take the trick. It would be a little embarrassing to duck the queen only to find you with A-J-10-x! Once partner takes the trick it is curtains.