

THINKING BRIDGE - 9

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Card combinations, part 9

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

Bidding commentary: A 19-point balanced hand with four aces plus a five-card suit headed by two honors should be upgraded by at least one point and treated as a 20-point hand. This hand is oodles better than a balanced 20-count with a 4-3-3-3 or some 4-4-3-2 pattern. It is also the reason not to open 1NT with a balanced 17 high-card points with a five-card suit headed by any two honors. Treat it as an 18 point hand.

Play Commentary: You start with seven top tricks and have to develop either clubs or spades for two additional tricks. But which suit should you attack? If either suit breaks 3-3 (36%), it doesn't matter which one you attack. However, there is a decided advantage in attacking spades starting with the ace and then playing low from both hands on the second spade play. Why? Assuming a 4-2 break (3-3 doesn't matter), you will take three spade tricks anytime either opponent has honor doubleton (16%). Once second hand plays low, you have to hope fourth hand is the one with honor doubleton. An extra 16% is not be sneezed at