

Good news! I am not going to bitch about “second hand high” problems. I’ve wore that one out. I need to find a new topic to “wear out”. I suppose I could just be pleasant today. OK, I’ll try it. I have seen some exceptionally good play recently. (see, that was pleasant! I’m glad that’s over.) CHAT players are playing a lot of hands about equal to the Friday club participants. I told one CHAT player recently “You played every card right. You took every trick possible.”

She thanked me and looked quite relieved. She wasn’t sure if she had played it right. That’s not unusual (for all of us). I often find out the truth after the game is over and I am looking at the club website. If you don’t use the club website (rochestermnbridge.net), try it. Nate has turned the RESULTS section into a treasure trove of information. The work you do AFTER the game might be more important than your play that day. If you don’t know how to examine these results, let me know. Nate would gladly do another education session for us. There is more information available out there than most of us realize.

I have suggested before that we should pause and plan before playing to the first trick. Oh good! I do have another topic to wear out! This is a good place for me to be repetitive and annoying. It is crucial. OK, so what should you as declarer think about before playing to trick one?

You should think about Analyzing the opening lead and Reviewing the bidding. Books have been written on this. The amount of information available about the opening lead and the bidding (or lack of bidding) is astounding. There is much more to this topic than what I have to say. This is just a snippet.

LHO leads a card. Why did he lead that suit? Forget the suit. That’s another discussion. Let’s just talk about what the actual card led tells us and then tie what we learn into the review of the bidding.

The Lead - **What does it tell us**

The Ace – LHO has the King (thus at least 7 points)

The King – LHO has the Queen (at least 5 points).

The Queen, the Jack, etc.

Lead looks like the top of nothing? Then RHO has the missing high cards.

Lead likely promises an honor? Useful: Who to finesse? Who has the missing points?

Looks like 4th best? Use the rule of 11 to get info about RHO cards.

Did **Grant** make the opening lead? Use “The Law of Diminishing Returns”.

(Don’t think about it.)

Nothing earthshaking here, simple stuff, but good information that can help you determine where the missing high cards are placed. You see your hand and the dummy. You know exactly how many points the opponents have. Try to determine how these points are split between them. The bidding will help.

Suppose you are the opening bidder and bid 1♥.

1♥ P 1NT
2♦ 3♥ P 4♥ (passed out)

You end up as declarer in 4♥. LHO opens the ♠K. Time for a short pause to think and plan. What do you know at this point? A LOT!

Say that you and your partner have 25 points. The opponents have 15. LHO is likely showing 5 points by opening the ♠K (should have ♠KQ). RHO showed 10+ for the 2♦ overcall.

So LHO has ♠KQ only (there are no points left). Play accordingly. You have yet to play to trick one and you know where ALL the missing high cards are. Don't mess this one up!

I set up this example to illustrate a point. But this bidding sequence is not unusual. I wrote a lot of words here, but the thinking needed for this analysis is about 10-15 seconds (if you do this regularly). Do it regularly.

Arne Fockler