

Inferences from the Bidding

A talk by Scott Nason



February 12, 2022



Today's Themes

1. There are 13 cards in each suit and 13 cards in each hand.
2. There are 40 high card points in each deal.
3. Every bid and every play tells you something about who has what. It is simply a matter of paying close attention and drawing the right inferences.
4. Many of inferences we will make today are not difficult, but it is a mindset to

“think to do it”



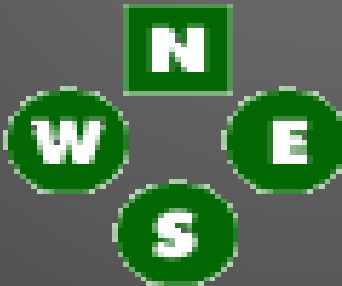
Grant Baze on Watching the Cards



Our first hand

East opens 1C after which you land in 3NT. West leads the H5.

♠ 98 ♥ AT3 ♦ QJ98 ♣ AQJ9

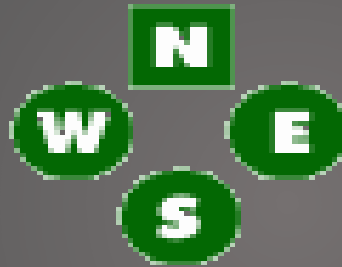


♠ AKQ3 ♥ 9 ♦ AT72 ♣ T432



Our first hand – taking stock

♠ 98 ♥ AT3 ♦ QJ98 ♣ AQJ9



♠ AKQ3 ♥ 9 ♦ AT72 ♣ T432

Hold up play? Yes, although hearts are likely 5/4

Avoidance Play? No

We **know** which finesse will work. Take the D

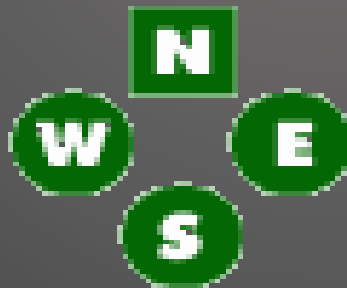
▶ finesse ▶ and claim nine tricks ▶ ▶ ▶



Our next hand

After three passes, South opens 1C and partner drives to 5C. West leads the D deuce.

♠ K8 ♥ J43 ♦ KJ8 ♣ KT952



♠ A53 ♥ AQ65 ♦ T72 ♣ AJ2

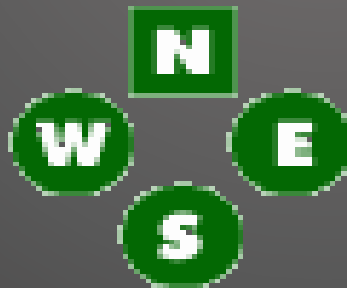


Looking for the opponents' points

The theme here is similar, but we have to look harder.

- We have to lose 1D and 1H, so we need to avoid a club loser

♠ K8 ♥ J43 ♦ KJ8 ♣ KT952



♠ A53 ♥ AQ65 ♦ T72 ♣ AJ2



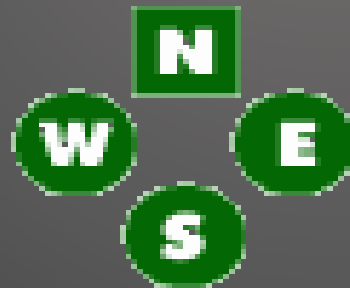
Seeking to learn

We duck from dummy, E wins the A and returns the SQ (suggesting the J.) What do we know?

- East has shown up with 7 points (3 in S, 4 in D).

What if he has the HK? How do we find out?

♠ K8 ♥ J43 ♦ KJ8 ♣ KT952



♠ A53 ♥ AQ65 ♦ T72 ♣ AJ2

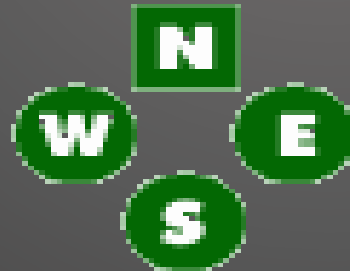


A revealing play

We win the spade K and delay playing clubs. Instead play the HJ from dummy. East covers with the K.

- East has shown up with 10 points, as a passed hand. Now we “know” where the CQ is, so we run the CJ and claim our contract.

♠ K8 ♥ J43 ♦ KJ ♣ KT952



♠ A53 ♥ AQ65 ♦ T7 ♣ AJ2

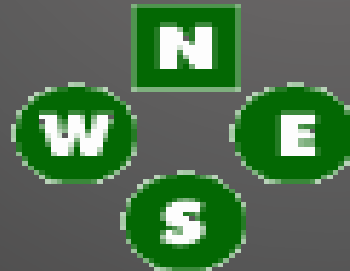


How to play the clubs?

You are in 3NT and get the spade T led. You count winners: 2S, 3H, 1D and 3 or 4C. What could go wrong?

- If you lose two clubs, they might also take 3 spades.

♠ 85 ♥ KJ3 ♦ J53 ♣ QJ952



♠ AQ3 ♥ AQ5 ♦ A72 ♣ A643

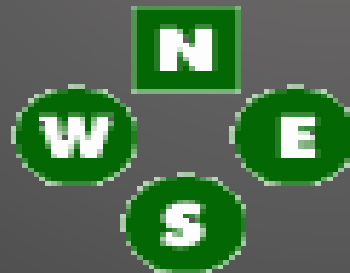


Where is the Club King?

You could play the CQ and run it (if not covered) or you could play the CA and play low toward the Q. Either might work ... or might not.

- What if I told you that East opened 1S?
- What if West opened 1S?

♠ 85 ♥ KJ3 ♦ J53 ♣ QJ952



♠ AQ3 ♥ AQ5 ♦ A72 ♣ A643



8 Ever 9 Never?

Your partner opens 1C, you bid 1H and West bid 1S. Partner rebids 2H and East now bids 3D. You might double, but instead bid 4H, ending the auction.

- West leads the D8, East wins the A and returns a small spade. West wins the Q and A and plays a club.
- What do we know and how should we play hearts?

♠ 853 ♥ AT9 ♦ 3 ♣ AK9532



♠ KJ ♥ KJ7652 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ 6

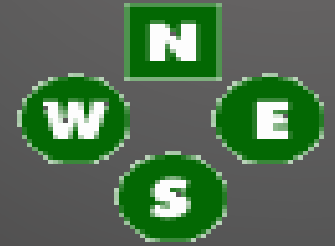


8 Ever 9 Never?

The rule of thumb says that with nine hearts, you should play the A and K, hoping to drop the HQ. But you know there is lots of “shape” on this hand. You “know”:

- West has 5 spades and East has 3.
- East has 5 or 6 diamonds, so West has 2 or 3
- What about clubs?

♠ 853 ♥ AT9 ♦ 3 ♣ AK9532



♠ KJ ♥ KJ7652 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ 6



8 Ever 9 Never?

It must be safe to cash the CK, since there doesn't seem to be room for five clubs in East's hand. When you do, East ... discards. So West started with at least 5S, 2D and 5C ... and at most 1H.

- This time: 8 Ever, 9 Definitely.
- You will cash the HA and then finesse against East's Q

♠ 853 ♥ AT9 ♦ 3 ♣ AK9532



♠ KJ ♥ KJ7652 ♦ KQJ2 ♣ 6

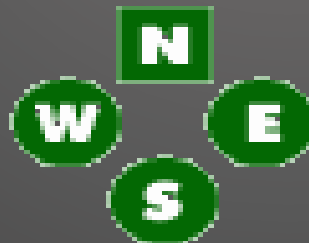


Trust your gut? Not if you don't have to

You are south and pick up this huge hand. You open 2C, partner bids 2D (promising “something useful”) and East annoyingly bids 3S. You bid 4H and partner comes alive with 4S. You ask for aces and when partner shows two, you bid 7H.

- West leads a spade.
- How do you like your chances? How will you play?

♠ A53 ♥ 983 ♦ 432 ♣ AT32



♠ 4 ♥ AKQJ2 ♦ AKQ ♣ KQ96

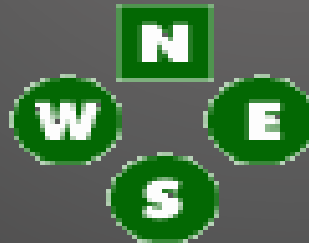


Easy Peasy?

You count twelve top tricks and the 13th must come from clubs.

- Easy if clubs are 3/2
- Still easy if you prepare for the “right” opponent to have Jxxx
- You win the spade in dummy, pull trumps (West has 3; East 2)
- How do you play clubs, knowing that West has 5 or 6 cards in the majors and East has 8 or 9?

♠ A53 ♥ 983 ♦ 432 ♣ AT32



♠ 4 ♥ AKQJ2 ♦ AKQ ♣ KQ96



The theme is inferences from the bidding

The bidding and play to the trump suit suggests that you cash the CK and CQ, planning to finesse against West's J if East shows out. Is that the best line? NO

- Before you do that, you can use a discovery play in diamonds to learn something very important. East discards a spade on the second round of diamond!

♠ A53 ♥ 983 ♦ 432 ♣ AT32



♠ 4 ♥ AKQJ2 ♦ AKQ ♣ KQ96

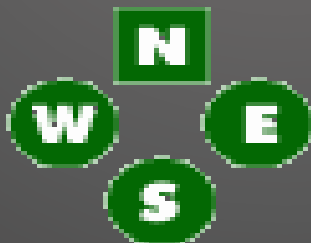


And now you KNOW

West may only have 5 or 6 cards in the majors, but she has 6 diamonds, and therefore at most 2 clubs.

- Cash the CK and play small to the A, planning to finesse against East's J when/if West shows out on the second round.
- Grand Slam made!

♠ A53 ♥ 983 ♦ 432 ♣ AT32



♠ 4 ♥ AKQJ2 ♦ AKQ ♣ KQ96

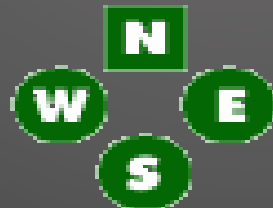


Which is better?

West passes, partner passes (since he cannot bid 2D; you play Flannery), and East passes. You open 1NT, partner aggressively invites and you accept. Now you need to make it.

- West leads a small spade and you are nervous. If they start with four spade tricks, you will have no chance, but East wins the spade Q and returns the 9. West wins the AK and plays the last spade.

♠ T3 ♥ 83 ♦ AKJ432 ♣ T32



♠ J742 ♥ AKQJ ♦ 85 ♣ AJ9

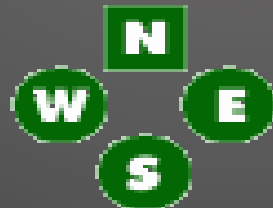


Which is better?

You have two pretty good options, but cannot try both. You must choose between 1) taking the D finesse and hoping they are 3/2 or that West has the Q (an 84% chance) or 2) using your two diamond entries to take two club finesses (a 75% chance). Which one?

- The bidding tells you. West is a passed hand with the AK of spades. In today's aggressive opening bids, she surely won't have both of the club honors. So ... take the double club hook.

♠ T3 ♥ 83 ♦ AKJ432 ♣ T32



♠ J742 ♥ AKQJ ♦ 85 ♣ AJ9

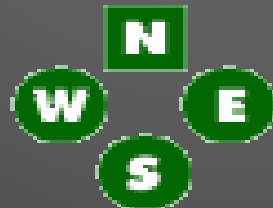


A Choice between equals?

Here you will have to choose between two totally equal options, if you don't look elsewhere for guidance. You open 1C in fourth seat, East overcalls 1S over partner's 1H and you pass. North bids 1NT and East comes in again with 2D. You bid 2NT and partner now decides to raise aggressively to 3.

- West leads the diamond 4, either fourth best or 3 to an honor.

♠ K3 ♥ KJ83 ♦ 32 ♣ KT532



♠ A42 ♥ 94 ♦ Q85 ♣ AQJ94



A Choice between Equals?

You have been in worse contracts, but this one doesn't feel great. Still, East wins the AK of diamonds and returns the J. So, far so good.

- It looks like diamonds are 4/4 and the game will turn on your play in hearts. Do you feel better?
- If East has both heart honors, then you have no chance. If West has both, then you can't miss.
- What do you do?

♠ K3 ♥ KJ83 ♦ 32 ♣ KT532



♠ A42 ♥ 94 ♦ Q85 ♣ AQJ94



A Choice between Equals?

If they are split, then you had better guess right. But it isn't a guess. East, a passed hand, has shown up with AKJ of D and might have a spade card. She can't have the HA.

- So, after running the clubs, you will play a low heart, planning to rise with the K if West plays low.

♠ K3 ♥ KJ83 ♦ 32 ♣ KT532



♠ A42 ♥ 94 ♦ Q85 ♣ AQJ94

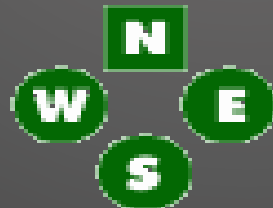


Send a Boy or a Man?

This time you will be confronted by a potential overruff and must decide “how high”. After East opens 1C, you get to what you expected would be a cold 4S. But duplications in the red suits mean that you might go down.

- West leads the CQ, East overtakes and cashes three more top clubs (West has a doubleton) and then leads the last club honor.

♠ AT93 ♥ J4 ♦ AJ2 ♣ 8753



♠ KJ842 ♥ AK ♦ KQ5 ♣ 642

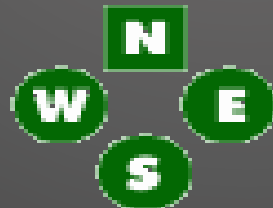


Send a Boy or a Man?

By now you get the point: You and your partner have 26 high card points between you, West has shown up with two, and East opened the bidding.

- East must have the SQ, so rough with the J, play a spade to the A and run the Ten, picking up East's "known" SQ.

♠ AT93 ♥ J4 ♦ AJ2 ♣ 8753



♠ KJ842 ♥ AK ♦ KQ5 ♣ 642



If there is only one chance ...

Sometimes you are in a tough spot and “expect” to go down, but there is one lie of the cards that will let you succeed. Then you must play for the best case.

- Here, after three passes, you open 1C. Partner raises to 3C and you find yourself in this precarious spot.

♠ AJ3 ♥ 874 ♦ KJ ♣ Q8753



♠ KQ82 ♥ 652 ♦ A65 ♣ K42

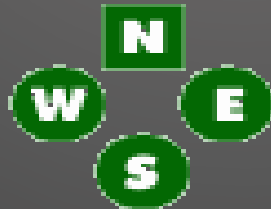


If there is only one chance ...

West leads a heart and East wins the A, K and Q. You have lost three tricks and are in serious danger of losing two clubs. The only way to bring in the clubs with one loser is to 1) find one opponent with Ax and 2) guess which one it is. Who is the only opponent that might have that holding?

- It can't be East, so you must hope it is West.

♠ AJ3 ♥ 874 ♦ KJ ♣ Q8753



♠ KQ82 ♥ 652 ♦ A65 ♣ K42



Too many choices

Next is one of my favorite hands from a team game. I opened 1H, West overcalled 1S and my partner pushed us to 6H. West led the heart 4.

- Surely he didn't have the nerve to lead small from Kx, did he?

♠ 3 ♥ AQT873 ♦ AT54 ♣ 53



♠ KJ ♥ J9652 ♦ QJ ♣ AQ42

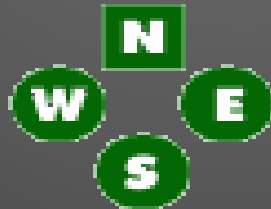


Too many choices

No. I went up with the HA, dropping the stiff K. I am going to need the diamond finesse to work, but can I avoid the club finesse?

- Maybe. I played a heart to my hand and tabled the DQ.
- West covered with the K, I won the A and played a diamond back to my J.

♠ 3 ♥ AQT873 ♦ AT54 ♣ 53



♠ KJ ♥ J9652 ♦ QJ ♣ AQ42

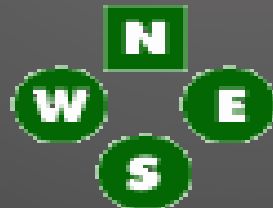


Too many choices

I played a heart to the board, cashed the DT and made the key play.

- What do you discard from the south hand?

♠ 3 ♥ T87 ♦ T5 ♣ 53



♠ KJ ♥ 96 ♦ ♣ AQ42

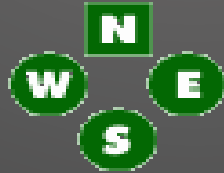


Remember the bidding

Without any bidding, you might pitch a club, try a spade to the J, hoping to pitch a club on the SK and if not, fall back on the club finesse.

- But you are nearly certain that the spade ace is on your left (and probably the Q as well), so... discard the SJ.
- Now you ruff the last diamond and play the SK
- West must win and either give you a sluff and ruff or lead into your C A and Q

♠ 3 ♥ AQT873 ♦ AT54 ♣ 53



♠ KJ ♥ J9652 ♦ QJ ♣ AQ42



The Bidding Can Save You

On this hand, the bidding may save you from the “normal” line of play, that is sure to lose, to an alternative line that should be a sure thing.

- After three passes, you open 1S and land in 4S.
- West leads the AKQ of hearts. You ruff with the 9 (always good technique to preserve your options.)
- It looks like it comes down to the club finesse. Or ...

♠ 8 ♥ 873 ♦ KQT9 ♣ AT653



♠ AKQJT97 ♥ 52 ♦ 4 ♣ QJ2



When the Bidding Tells You “Don’t”

The club finesse looks like a loser. West, a passed hand led out the top three hearts. It is very likely that she doesn’t have the CK. Or the DA.

- Knowing that, you look for an alternative to the clubs and find it.
- What if you lead a diamond to the 9?

♠ 8 ♥ ♦ KQT9 ♣ AT653



♠ AKQJT7 ♥ ♦ 4 ♣ QJ2



When the Bidding Tells You “Don’t”

East wins the J, but what can he do? He will likely return a spade (but any lead will be okay).

- You will play the carefully-preserved spade 7 and win in dummy. Now play the DK, planning to discard a club if East ducks.
- You plan to pull trumps and use the CA to return to cash another diamond.

♠ 8 ♥ ♦ KQT ♣ AT653



♠ AKQJT7 ♥ ♦ ♣ QJ2



Lessons Learned

1. Pay close attention and count everything.
2. Every bid and every play gives you information. Make inferences!
3. Before you make a competitive bid, remember that it might just help declarer.





Questions and Answers

That's all folks!



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