

Too Much Information



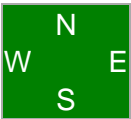
The opposition may find the best way to defend and to play hands but we should not make either any easier than we have to. On the following two boards, the opposition “knew too much” and got it right! We helped their cause. That was not to our benefit!

The first came in the bidding. South opened 1♥ promising at least a five-card suit and with no shortage, two kings and five trumps, North jumped to 4♥. This left West on lead with the following:

♠ J42 ♥ 2 ♦ A76 ♣ KT9876

What would your choice be?

Meanwhile, which card do you play at trick 2...and trick 3 on the following hand. Again, you are West:

Board 16		♠ 10 8 7	
West Deals		♥ K J 4 2	
E-W Vul		♦ K 8 6 3	
		♣ 8 2	
		♠ A K J	
		♥ 10 8 6 5	
		♦ 4	
		♣ J 9 6 5 4	
			
West	North	East	South
<i>you</i>	<i>dummy</i>		
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♦
Dbl	3 ♦	All pass	

Your double showed 4+ hearts. 1♣ was 3+ clubs. You lead ♣5 to partner's ace and declarer's 10. East switches to ♠3.

It's Easier when Partner Speaks

Back to our opening lead. Yes, you can beat 4♥ but not if you led a club. How would you know? Well, it is much easier if your partner had managed to bid diamonds. They could not in the direct to game sequence given above but this was **not** the hour to wheel out a Bergen raise:

<i>Board 26</i>		♠ K 10 5 3										
East Deals		♥ K 10 7 6 5										
Both Vul		♦ 8 4										
		♣ 4 2										
♠ J 4 2		<div style="display: inline-block; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px; border: 1px solid black;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 9 8 7
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 2			♥ J 9									
♦ A 7 6			♦ K J 10 9 3 2									
♣ K 10 9 8 7 6			♣ J									
		♠ Q 6										
		♥ A Q 8 4 3										
		♦ Q 5										
		♣ A Q 5 3										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>									
		Pass	1 ♥									
Pass	3 ♣	3 ♦	4 ♥									
All pass												

3♣ promised 4, maybe 5, card trump support and 6-9 hcp, Bergen style, technically correct but practically wrong. This bid enabled East to make a lead directional call and thus help their partner with the opening lead.

A spade lead (fairly unattractive from J42) or the singleton trump would work for the defence as long as East switches to diamonds when in with SA (S10 will force the play of that card) but after the club lead it is a claim for a declarer.

Why bid directly to a contract we may not make? The answer is obvious. Opening leads are so variable. We may make. Don't make it any easier for them than you have to. Bid game directly and perhaps record +620. Five out of eight declarers in 4♥ did.

Great Switch, partner

It was and after that initial club lead, East-West, or shall we say, West, took the next three spade tricks as West played ♠J to be followed by ♠A and then ♠K.

West exited with a club... and the declarer took the next 9 tricks to make their contract. "What, you may ask, is wrong with that?". Take a look:

Board 16		♠ 10 8 7	
West Deals		♥ K J 4 2	
E-W Vul		♦ K 8 6 3	
		♣ 8 2	
♠ A K J			♠ Q 5 4 3
♥ 10 8 6 5			♥ Q 7
♦ 4			♦ Q 10 2
♣ J 9 6 5 4			♣ A Q 7 3
		♠ 9 6 2	
		♥ A 9 3	
		♦ A J 9 7 5	
		♣ K 10	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	Pass	1 ♣	1 ♦
Dbl	3 ♦	All pass	

"Taking the next nine tricks" involved taking the unnatural position of finessing for the trump queen when the defence only had four of them and then dropping East's doubleton ♥Q when West had bid the suit! Was South a genius?

South played the hand well but had had, shall we say, a little help along the way from the defence.

When West took their three spade tricks, they told the declarer an awful lot about East's hand... too much. East had opened the bidding with at most two hcp in spades and seven in clubs. West had shown up with 8 hcp in spades and was a passed hand! Where were the two red suit queens? I think my money, and certainly South's money was on East. The defence had told South too much about their hands.

We should acknowledge that West had done well not to lead their top spades at tricks 1,2 and 3 as that would have provided the same information to South.

Perhaps East was in too much of a hurry to switch to spades but West too quick to reveal all. Maybe take the ♠A and return a club. South may still have placed the cards correctly but it would have been much harder, very much harder had East returned a passive club at trick 2. My money would then firmly be on East winning one of their red queens and to record +100.

Don't tell them too much, any more than you have to. They are then more likely to get the defence or the play wrong.

Richard Solomon