



Open Hands

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Open Challenge Hand 1 (Bid and Play)

North (D)	EW Vul, Dealer: North
♠ AKQJ	
♥ JT	
♦ QJ976	
♣ 76	
South	
♠ 763	
♥ A98	
♦ T42	
♣ AQJT	

Standard Bidding			
West	North (D)	East	South
	1♦	1♥	2NT
PASS	3NT	All PASS	

Assuming you can reach a 3NT contract,
West leads ♥2 (low card from 3 or 5)..

How do you plan to make your game contract?

Open Challenge Hand 2 (Bid and Play)

North (D)	All Vul, Dealer: North
♠ KJ92	
♥ K854	
♦ A	
♣ K986	
South	
♠ AQ53	
♥ A9	
♦ 42	
♣ A7543	

Standard Bidding			
West	North (D)	East	South
	1♣	PASS	1♠
PASS	3♠	PASS	4♣
PASS	4♦	PASS	4NT
PASS	5♥	PASS	6♣
All Pass			

West leads the ♣2, an obvious singleton.

Can you see your way to 12 tricks on this deal?

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Editor Comments:

This revised Newsletter format (email & PDFs triggered from the email) is designed to ease the big PDF files that used to be delivered. It also allows more focused content.
Kevin

♦ LM - Defence in Detail 7



“If you are ever to amount to anything at this game, you must build up a picture of the unseen hands.”

Defending as West in an imps game, your opponents bid to a conservative part score:

West Deals ♠ K Q J 5
 Both Vul ♥ A J 10 6
 ♦ Q 6 5
 ♣ 10 9

♠ 7 3
 ♥ 8 4 2
 ♦ 9 4 3
 ♣ A J 8 7 6

West North East South
 Pass 1♣ Pass 1♠
 Pass 2♠ Pass Pass
 Pass
 2♠ by South

Without any clear thoughts on the matter, you lead the ♦3 (thirds and fifths). Dummy plays low, partner inserts the ♦T and declarer wins their ♦K. After drawing two rounds of trumps on the dummy, declarer plays a club to their ♣K and your ♣A as partner follows with the ♣2 (reverse count). You continue with the ♦9. This pleasingly wins the trick as dummy plays the ♦6, partner the ♦2 and declarer the ♦7.

How should you defend in this situation with two tricks in the bag so far?

♠ J 5
 ♥ A J 10 6
 ♦ Q
 ♣ 10

♠ 8 4 2
 ♥ 4
 ♦ J 8 7 6

What do we know about the hand? It sure looks like declarer has the ace of trumps, and probably five of them unless they have left partner with one trump out. We have also seen the king of clubs and king of diamonds from declarer. Straight away, we should realise that declarer probably has zero other high cards. Because we can see all the jacks (partner must have the ♦J) anything else would give declarer 12 points; they would not have passed 2♠.

What about the shape? Partner probably has four diamonds (assuming the ♦2 on the second round is giving count) and either two or four clubs (because of the ♣2). If partner only has two clubs, declarer is going to ruff lots of losers and make a lot of tricks, so let's give partner four clubs and declarer two. Now we are getting somewhere. Declarer is probably 5-?=3=2 and therefore must have three little hearts. Do you see the danger now?

The full hand:

West Deals ♠ K Q J 5
 Both Vul ♥ A J 10 6
 ♦ Q 6 5
 ♣ 10 9

♠ 7 3
 ♥ 8 4 2
 ♦ 9 4 3
 ♣ A J 8 7 6

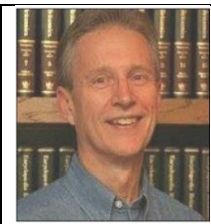
♠ 9 4
 ♥ K Q 5
 ♦ A J 10 2
 ♣ Q 5 4 2

♠ A 10 8 6 2
 ♥ 9 7 3
 ♦ K 8 7
 ♣ K 3

The opponents did well to stop in just 2♠, but even that contract is beatable if you get all your tricks. Bob Hamman's advice (in the opening quote) would have served you very well on this hand. It feels so natural to cash partner's diamond trick, but your instincts may have led you astray here. Partner wins the ♦A and can exit a low club to you (partner is also counting the points) but now any return will lead to partner being endplayed in the heart suit. Without a second heart trick, declarer makes 2♠. The winning defence is to shift to a heart now while you have the lead – and make it the ♥2, suit preference for clubs. Partner wins, cashes their diamond and leads a low club back to your ♣Q. Game over for declarer.

Point to remember it's much easier to solve the problem if you know what the other hands look like. Make counting a habit, not a backup plan.

♦ BM – Assessing the situation



Brent Manley

This Challenge hand was adapted from a Brent Manley article “[Assessing the Situation](#)”. Sourced from the ACBL Bridge feed website

North (D)	Standard Bidding			
♠ AKQJ	West	North (D)	East	South
♥ JT		1♦	1♥	2NT
♦ QJ976	PASS	3NT	All PASS	
♣ 76	Bidding Notes			
	1♦	Opening Hand 4+♦		
	1♥	5+♥, Vul Overall		
	2NT	10-11 Bal, ♥ Stopper Invite		
	3NT	To Play		
South				
♠ 763				
♥ A98				
♦ T42				
♣ AQJT				

You are playing in a Teams match against a top team. After identical auctions, both West players led the ♥2 (low card from 3 or 5).

Your Solution

- T1 You played the ♥T and took East’s ♥Q with the ♥A.
- T2 You crossed to dummy via spades ♠3, ♠4, ♠A, ♠2.
- T3 You then led club ♣6, ♣8, ♣Q, which held the trick as West played ♣3
- T4 You then crossed back to dummy with another spade ♠6, ♠8, ♠K, ♠5
- T5 You then led the last club ♣7, ♣2, ♣J, but West now produced the ♣K
- T6 West and exited with the ♥5 to dummy’s ♥J, East thoughtfully played a low heart ♥4, and your contract could no longer be made.

You had to lose three hearts and two diamonds in addition to the trick in clubs.

Your teammates came back and to your horror, your **-100**, your team scored **-400** for a **10-imp loss**.

Your teammates said there was nothing they could do about the 3NT contract. They explained how the expert declarer had played the hand!

- T1 He played the ♥T and took East’s ♥Q with the ♥A.
- T2 He crossed to dummy via spades ♠3, ♠4, ♠A, ♠2.
- T3 He then led club ♣6, ♣8, ♣Q, which held the trick as West played ♣3

At the second table, the expert declarer paused to consider the matter after Trick 3. Whenever East had started with the ♣K, all would be well when declarer crossed back to dummy with a spade to repeat the club finesse. However, this declarer was aware that a good West would withhold the ♣K on the first round of the suit. Declarer therefore considered how to cater to that possibility. After a little thought, he found the answer:

- T4 He continued by cashing the clubs, ♣A, ♣4, ♣7, ♣2
- T5 He then played ♣J to West’s ♣K and threw the blocking ♥J from dummy, as East played ♣3.

Your teammates had no answer to this move. If they played on hearts, declarer would reach his hand in hearts to cash a good club: He would make four spades, two hearts and three clubs to bring his contract home.

Suspecting this,

T6 West exited with ♠9 to dummy’s ♠Q.

But the expert Declarer then played on diamonds and had time to set up two winners in the suit for his eighth and ninth tricks.

The full deal:

	North (D)	
	♠ AKQJ	
West	♥ JT	East
♠ T984	♦ QJ976	♠ 52
♥ 532	♣ 76	♥ KQ764
♦ 53		♦ AK8
♣ K943	South	♣ 852
	♠ 763	
	♥ A98	
	♦ T42	
	♣ AQJT	
3NT/S Lead ♥2		Vul Nil Dir: North

♦ MG – A Cold Game



Having spent what seems like a decade playing online bridge, I finally ventured back to the club for a team’s game. As my online friends already know, bridge is a game you play with one finger, not so for the face-to-face variety, where it takes both hands and a pen.



The director warned us to look out for anything strange in the boards as they were using new cards they had bought last minute from the pharmacist as the old cards had rotted away and the dealing machine had gone a bit rusty over the break. “I know how it feels!” I thought as I fumbled around trying to sort my cards and sent half of them flying around the room.

We got through the bidding okay on the first hand, in fact the director wasn’t called until trick five. Declarer had trumped with the 10 and I had played my Joker. Obviously, nothing beats the ace of trumps, but we were having a heated argument about where in the pecking order the Joker would fit. I argued that it must be higher than a card without a picture and Dummy was claiming that the 10 was an honour. I had tried to legitimise my play by also adding the card you sometimes get with the two Jokers that tells you how to score at bridge. I don’t think that helped and my partner had suggested I should probably hang on to that one and read it at least once. The director didn’t so much give a ruling as tell us to keep the noise down as we were disturbing the bridge players.

On the second hand I revoked on trick 13. The rules clearly state that you can’t revoke on the second last trick but that only applies if you have 13 cards, and on this hand both declarer and I had 14 each, dummy and my partner having run out of cards some time earlier. The director seemed a little annoyed with me by this

point and ruled a two-trick penalty resulting in the opponents making 16 tricks in 7NT for a top score.

The director warned me that if she had to come back to my table again, she was going to close the bar, so on hand 3 I was trying to be on my best behaviour.

Now everyone knows that in a bridge column you only show one hand, or for play problems, one hand plus dummy, and you walk the reader through the thought process before finally revealing all four hands and solving the mystery. That seems to be a fairly successful formula for bridge players, but I find just as much mystery in seeing all four hands as I do in one, so here is the full layout for board 3:

	North	
	♠ J3	
West	♥ K72	East
♠ AK7	♦ A6	♠ Q86
♥ Q9865	♣ J98432	♥ J43
♦ QJ852		♦ KT
♣	South (D)	♣ AQ765
	♠ T9542	
	♥ AT	Board 3 EW Vul
	♦ 9743	
	♣ KT	

The hand record states that EW can make 10 tricks in hearts. A cold game.

I was sitting East.

The bidding was no more random than usual. In an uncontested auction my partner opened 1♣ (Precision, 16+ points), I replied 2NT (11-12 balanced), partner bid 3♦ (transfer to ♥s) and after my 3♥ bid she raised me to 4♥.

South led the ♦7 and I thought about claiming before I messed anything else up. They could get the ♥AK (trumps) and the ♦A. Even I couldn’t go off in this one. However, I had been reading about elimination plays and it seemed that if you could get rid of every card in a suit from both hands you often ended up with more tricks.

I decided to play it out.

North won the first trick with **♦A** and switched to a spade. I won it in hand and started to eliminate diamonds by playing the **♦K**. Everyone followed suit, but now I had run out of diamonds and needed another plan. I decided to try to eliminate clubs. I played the **♣A** from my hand, South played the **♣T** and I waited to see what would happen.

After about 30 seconds my partner asked, "What are you playing?". I looked at the **A♣** sitting on the table in front of me and stated the obvious, "The Ace."

At this point South became very animated. "Did you just ask your partner what card to play *from dummy*?" she questioned my centre opponent.

"Yes." She replied.

"Fine, then as the only Ace in dummy, the **♠A** is a played card."

I was endplayed. If I called the director I might never be invited back. Reluctantly, I allowed my partner to play the **♠A** underneath my **♣A**.

A bit dejected now, I decided that elimination plays could wait for another day. I led a heart from my hand to dummy's Queen and North's King. North played another spade back, won on the table with my now lonely King **♠K** and I played a heart which I ducked to South's **♥A**. This was the position now:

	North	
	♠	
West	♥ 7	East
♠	♦	♠ 8
♥ 986	♣ J9843	♥ J
♦ QJ8		♦
♣	South (D)	♣ Q765
	♠ T95	
	♥	
	♦ 94	
	♣ K	
		Board 3 EW Vul

South led **♠9** and I thought for a moment. Having been totally unsuccessful at eliminating either diamonds or clubs I was now quite confused.

"What are trumps?"

"Hearts." Replied my poor partner.

"Are there any still out?" I looked at my opponents for help, but they seemed reluctant to provide even the most basic information.

"Oh well. Middle-for-diddle. Play the **♥8**."

It held the trick, so I played another heart to the Jack and as I was pretty sure the clubs weren't good, I trumped one and when the dust settled it turned out that dummy's diamonds were all good, making 10 tricks.

When we returned to our home table to score up with our teammates I apologised, "Sorry folks, I think I blew an overtrick on board 3. There was a bit of a misunderstanding and the **♠A** was the unfortunate victim."

"Don't worry", was the answer, "At our table they went off in 4♥."

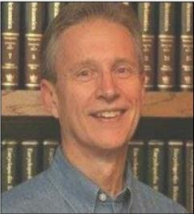
"Went off? In a cold game? What tricks did you get?"

"Ace and King of trumps, the **A♦**, and a spade ruff."

"A spade ruff?" My partner asked sarcastically. "Didn't they throw the **♠A** off on the **♣A**?"

I should have kept quiet, but I rarely get the chance to gloat, and I couldn't help myself. I shook my head, "Beginners."

♦ BM – Easy Road

	This Challenge hand was adapted from a Brent Manley article " Easy Road ". Sourced from the ACBL Bridge feed website
Brent Manley	

North (D)	Standard Bidding			
	West	North (D)	East	South
♠ KJ92		1♣	PASS	1♣
♥ K854		3♣	PASS	4♣
♦ A	PASS	4♦	PASS	4NT
♣ K986	PASS	5♥	PASS	6♣
	All Pass			
South	Bidding Notes			
♠ AQ53	1♣	2+C, opening Hand		
♥ A9	1♣	4+S, 6+hcp		
♦ 42	3♣	Good hand with 4S		
♣ A7543	4♣	Cue - slam try		
	4♦	Cue - Cooperates		
	4NT	Keycard (S)		
	5♥	2+QS		
	6♣	To play		

The Bidding

After a couple of control-bids and the application of Roman Key Card Blackwood, you placed the contract in the great spot of 6♣. West leads the ♣2, an obvious singleton. Can you see your way to 12 tricks on this deal?

Preliminary Analysis

Winners 3♠+2♥+1♦+4♣+ 2 ruffs = 12

Top Losers: None, deep ♣,

You saw that there would be 12 easy tricks if trumps were 3-2: he could draw trumps, concede a club to East and then take a ruff in a red suit for his 12th trick (he would make eight tricks in the black suits and the three red-suit winners in addition).

With that in mind, declarer turned his attention to what could be done if West had four trumps. After realizing that it would be best to ruff a heart in hand if that were case

Your Solution

- T1 West leads the ♣2, you began by calling for the ♠8 from dummy at trick one. (Preserving the small club as a possible entry) ♠T, ♣A
- T2-3 After drawing two rounds of trumps with the ♠A and then ♠J you discovered that West did indeed have four trumps.
- T4/5 You cashed the ♥K and then the ♥A in hand.
- T6 You led a low club ♣3 toward dummy. West discarded a diamond ♦3 because ruffing would give declarer the same easy road to 12 tricks that would be there if trumps had been 3-2. You won the trick with the ♣K
- T7 You then continued with a club ♣9 to East's ♠Q, West again dropping a ♦5.
- T8 East exited with the ♥J and you overcame this by ruffing it with the high ♠Q.
- T9 Next you led a low trump ♠5 and covered West's ♠8 with dummy's ♠9.
- T10 You then cashed ♠K, drawing West's last trump,
- T11 You then led dummy's carefully preserved ♣6 to your ♣7 in hand
- T12 You then cashed the ♣5 for his 11th trick, discarding dummy's remaining heart on it.
- T13 The ♦A was your 12th trick.

You should note that declarer's unblocking plays in clubs (preserving ♣6) were necessary on this layout. Failure to do so would have seen the contract fail. The full deal:

	North (D)	
	♠ KJ92	
West	♥ K854	East
♠ T864	♦ A	♠ 7
♥ Q3	♣ K986	♥ JT762
♦ K97653		♦ QJT8
♣ 2	South	♣ QJT
	♠ AQ53	
	♥ A9	
	♦ 42	
	♣ A7543	
6♣/S Lead ♣2		Vul All Dir: North