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Rookie Challenge Hand 1 (Bid and Play)

North		All Vul, Dealer West			
West (D)	North	East	South		
1♦	Pass	Pass	X		
Pass	3♣	Pass	3♣		
Pass	4♣				

North		South	
♠ KJT		♠ AQ9843	
♥ T42		♥ AKJ5	
♦ J53		♦ Q82	
♣ AQJ5		♣ --	

Assuming you can reach 4♣ contract. EW cash 2 top diamonds, then east ruffs the third. Trick 4 East continues with the ♥3. How do you play the hand?

Rookie Challenge Hand 2 (Play)

North		You are South in 3NT, with no EW bidding..	
West (D)	North	East	South
T1	West leads the ♣4.		
Dummy's ♣9, which wins at trick one			
How do you plan to make your contract?			

North		South	
♠ AQJT		♠ 64	
♥ 63		♥ AQJT	
♦ AQJ8		♦ KT93	
♣ JT9		♣ K53	



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 Pat O'Connor	Ruffing Losers It is from my book <i>“A Second Book of Bridge Problems.”</i>
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What next?

If you have to ruff a side-suit loser in dummy and cannot draw all the trumps first, hope that the long trumps are with the long side suit holding.

♦ EK – Take all your Chances

Solution to Rookie Challenge 1



Eddie Kantar

This article was based on a Kantar [‘Take all your chances’](#) series article in the ACBL “Bridge Feed” website.

North		Standard Bidding			
♠ KJT		West (D)	North	East	South
♥ T42		1♦	Pass	Pass	X
♦ J53		Pass	3♣	Pass	3♣
♣ AQJ5		Pass	4♣		
		Bidding Notes			
South		1♦	4+♦, Opening hand		
♠ AQ9843		X	Takeout		
♥ AKJ5		3♣	Max Pass		
♦ Q82		3♣	5+♣		
♣ --		4♣	Fit, To play		

With both sides vulnerable, West opens 1♦, North and East pass, you double, partner responds 3♣, too strong to make a forced 2♣ response. You bid 3♣, forcing, and partner raises to 4♣. Incidentally, when making or responding to a takeout double, devalue jacks and queens in any suit or suits the opponents have bid unless responding in notrump or having a death wish.

- T1 West leads the ♦A, East ♦9 encourages.
 T2 West continues ♦K East ♦7 High/low
 T3 West Continues with ♦T. East trumps ♠6
 T4 East exits ♥3.

Spades are 2-2. What is your plan? (Notice that the jack and queen of diamonds were worthless).
 12 HCP are missing and West, the vulnerable opening bidder, is a heavy favourite (100%?) to have all 12. So

- T4 East exits ♥3, So you win the ♥A, ♥7, ♥2
 T5 Cross to dummy with ♠3 to ♠K,
 T6 Cash the ♠A, discarding a heart from hand
 T7 Continue with ♣5, and trump ♠4
 T8 Return to dummy with a second spade ♠8 to ♠J
 T9 play ♣Q and ♠9.

If the ♠K drops (it does) , use the ♠J to discard a second heart from hand.
 If the ♠K does not appear, try to drop a doubleton ♥Q in the West hand.

Why finesse into a player who is known to have the queen?

Tip #1

When the bidding tells you that a particular defender **must have a particular card**, play that defender for that card even if it means going against the odds in the play of that suit.

Tip #2

Assume an **opening bidder has at least 12 HCP** unless the opener is known to have a distributional hand in which case 10 or 11 HCP is possible.

You combined your 2 best chances to make your contract

- Short ♣K
- Failing that, a doubleton ♥Q

The full hand:

		North			
		♠ KJT			
West (D)		♥ T42		East	
♠ 54		♦ J53		♠ 76	
♥ Q87		♣ AQJ5		♥ 963	
♦ AKT64				♦ 97	
♣ KT9		South		♠ 876432	
		♠ AQ9843			
		♥ AKJ5			
		♦ Q82			
		♣ --			
4♠/S Lead ♦AK				Vul Both Dir: W	

ML – Card Combination



Card Combination

By Mike Larence

from article in the ACBL
“Bridge Feed” website.

North ♠ KJ42 ♥ QT9 ♦ A72 ♣ 642		Standard or 2/1 Bidding			
		West (D)	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass	1♣	X
		Pass	2♣	Pass	3NT
		All Pass			
		Bidding Notes			
		1♣	2+♣ light 11 hcp		
		X	too Strong for 1NT		
		2♣	8+ 4♣		
		3NT	To Play		
South ♠ 765 ♥ AK8 ♦ K95 ♣ AKQ3					

The Bidding

You (South) doubled East's third-seat 1♣ opening bid and then you bid 3NT over North's invitational 2♣ bid. South did not consider a slam since North was marked with a maximum of about 10/11 points.

T1 West Starts the defence with the lead of the ♠9, ♣2 from dummy and East overtook with the ♠T, and you (South) win the trick with the ♠Q.

Preliminary Analysis

Winners: 3x♥+2x♦+3x♣ = 8 tricks

Losers: ♠A, probably ♠Q for opening bid
 Strategies for 9th trick

- Need to win a Spade trick!
- Clubs 33, then 9th, but unlikely
- Or Need ♣/♠ squeeze
- Or endplay East to lead a Spade

Solution:

You decide to play for a spade trick, by force rather than to try for an endplay.

T2 So, you play ♠5, ♠8 from West, ♠J from dummy, and the ♠Q from East. So far, more or less predictable.
 T3 East exits with the ♠J, won by South's ♠K, as West followed suit ♠9. Dummy ♣4. East is now clearly marked with four clubs so there is no danger there.
 T4 You (South) continued spades again by leading the ♠6 to West's ♠T, the ♠K, and

East's ♠A. Is this all bad news or what? East did open the bidding!

T5 East again continued with the club exit ♠8 and you win with the ♠A, West showing out pitching a small heart (no like) ♥2, and dummy ♠6
 T6 How do you measure South's chances now? You continue with the ♠7 and West discarded another heart ♥3. Dummy ♠2 and East wins the ♠9.
 T7 East now cashed his high club ♣7, hand ♣3, West ♥4, dummy ♥9.
 T8 East now exits the ♦Q.

Can you make 3NT now? How?

The answer is embarrassingly simple. Go to dummy and cash the ♠4, dropping East's ♠3. Did you follow the spade spots, or did you overlook something? No need to tell anyone. It is between you and the ♠4.

	North ♠ KJ42 ♥ QT9 ♦ A72 ♣ 642	
West (D) ♠ T8 ♥ 65432 ♦ 8643 ♣ 95		East ♠ AQ93 ♥ J7 ♦ QJT ♣ JT87
3NT/S Lead ♠9	South ♠ 765 ♥ AK8 ♦ K95 ♣ AKQ3	Vul Nil Dir: W

Perhaps an easier strategy is the endplay for a Spade trick. If you assume East has all the missing 11 hcp including 4 clubs. You need to strip away his exit cards & then throw East in to lead spades for you.

T2-4 Cash 3 hearts ♥AKQ and discover east had only 2
 T5 Lead small diamond ♦2, East plays the ♦T, you can duck this ♦5, ♦4 (count)
 T6 East exits say ♣J, you win this ♣K.
 T78 Cash ♦AK
 T9 Cash ♠A, and if clubs break 33 you have the 9th trick. They do not.
 T10 Exit ♠3 into East high club ♠7
 T11+ East is endplayed and now must lead a spade into dummy ♠KJ4 and give you a spade trick.

♦ PH – Maximizing Stoppers

Solution to Rookie Challenge 2

	This article was based on a Bridge feed article "Maximizing Stoppers" by Pat Harrington.
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If you play your cards right, you can sometimes guarantee a second notrump stopper in the suit led by your opponents. You may have to manoeuvre the play to keep one opponent off lead. Plan the play on the first deal. You are South in 3NT.

T1 West leads the ♣4. Dummy's ♣9 wins at trick one.

North	
♠	AQJT
♥	63
♦	AQJ8
♣	JT9
South	
♠	64
♥	AQJT
♦	KT93
♣	K53

Count winners — one spade, one heart, the ♣9 and four diamonds. You could promote the Q-J-10 in either major to get the needed two tricks, but it's better to finesse.

A successful finesse could build three extra tricks, but there is an even more important reason to go for the needed tricks by finessing. Do you have a second club stopper? It depends on which opponent gains the lead. The fact that your ♣9 won the first trick tells you that West almost certainly has the missing high clubs.

If East gains the lead, a club return will trap your king and might allow West to run enough club tricks to set you. That makes East the opponent you want to keep off lead.

If the spade finesse loses, East will get in. Who will get in if the heart finesse loses?

West — the player who cannot attack your ♣K. So go for the needed tricks in hearts. The full deal:

West		North		East	
♠	872	♠	AQJT	♠	K963
♥	K74	♥	63	♥	9852
♦	62	♦	AQJ8	♦	754
♣	AQ742	♣	JT9	♣	86
3NT/S Lead ♣4		South		Vul Nil	
		♠	64		
		♥	AQJT		
		♦	KT93		
		♣	K53		

If you finesse in hearts, West can win but he cannot get East on lead.

On the next deal, you must make the right play at trick one and come up with a plan to guarantee your contract. You are in 3NT as South.

T1 West leads the ♥3. East wins the opening lead with the ♥A
T2 East returns the ♥4.

North	
♠	KQT8
♥	Q2
♦	QJ9
♣	QJT9
South	
♠	J3
♥	J86
♦	AKT4
♣	A973

What is the right play at trick one? Play a low heart from dummy. This guarantees that you will have a heart stopper. If East has no high hearts, your jack will win trick one. Even if East plays the ♥A or ♥K, you still have a stopper so long as you played low from dummy at trick one. That's one hurdle overcome!

Counting the heart trick, you have six winners (four diamonds, one club and one heart). You need three more. Your options: promote spades — a sure way to build three tricks — or finesse in clubs.

It's clear to go after spades provided you are not afraid of losing the lead. Are you? Not if you analyse the ♥3 lead carefully. It looks like fourth best. If it is, the defenders can take no more than three heart tricks (East's return of the ♥4 at trick two supports the notion that hearts are 4-4). So there's your plan: drive out the ♠A to make your contract. The full deal:

West		North	East	
♠ 954		♠ KQT8	♠ A762	
♥ KT53		♥ Q2	♥ A974	
♦ 862		♦ QJ9	♦ 753	
♣ K62		♣ QJT9	♣ 54	
3NT/S Lead ♥3		South	Vul Nil	
		♠ J3		
		♥ J86		
		♦ AKT4		
		♣ A973		

A club finesse will lose, and the defence will take three hearts and the ♠A to defeat you.

Success in playing a notrump contract involves more than counting winners. You must consider stoppers in the suit led and in other suits, and you must decide if and how often you can afford to lose the lead. Analyse the opening lead carefully to determine your opponents' holdings in that suit. The more you practice doing these things, the more successful you will be.

♦ JD – First do no harm



This article was based on a Bridge feed article "[First, Do no Harm](#)" by **Joan Dziekanski**.
[Link to full article](#)

Defending a bridge hand can be a difficult task because your goal as a defender is not always clear. Should you play aggressively to defeat the contract, or should you take a more relaxed approach so that you don't unnecessarily give declarer any extra tricks? To a certain extent, this question is often answered by the bidding and the level of the contract.

Passive defence is frequently suitable when the opponents are in a lower-level contract because you know your partner has some high cards. In addition, passive defence is suitable when there is no "dangerous" long suit in dummy waiting to be developed. This approach might be called "first, do no harm."

Say you pick up the following hand as West:

♠K7 ♥JT8 ♦AT98 ♣A954.

Standard Bidding			
You	North	East	South (D)
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
All pass			

What do you lead?

The answer here can be arrived at by process of elimination. Because LHO has bid spades, a spade lead is unattractive and can easily cost a trick. Unless you have a powerful holding in a suit bid on your left, you should generally refrain from leading that suit. Diamonds and clubs also have a problem. It is usually unwise to cash unsupported aces on the opening lead because it can too easily give declarer an extra trick. Imagine, for



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example, that declarer has the guarded king of the suit; banging down the ace on opening lead allows declarer to score a trick he wouldn't ordinarily be entitled to. Another reason that leading unsupported ace against parts scores is frequently poor is that it can give up control of the lead later in the play. And under-leading aces is a dangerous strategy that can easily blow a trick, sometimes by fooling partner who won't think that you've done such a thing.

So that leaves the heart suit. Although leading a trump for declarer can often be unattractive, it's the safest option on this particular hand. Which heart should you lead? This one is easy. You have a sequence, and top of a sequence is a standard lead: The ♥J is your best shot. Here's what you see:

You	Dummy
♠ K7	♠ Q5432
♥ JT8	♥ 9
♦ AT98	♦ QJ64
♣ A954	♣ QJT

T1 You lead ♥J, the ♥9 from dummy, and partner plays ♥2, as declarer wins in hand the ♥K.

Could partner have ducked with the trump ace? Certainly. Partner cannot go up with the ♥A because that would let declarer draw trumps with her ♥KQ next and only lose one heart to partner's ♥A.

T2 Declarer plays ♦5 toward dummy, and you duck. There's no reason to go up with the ♦A, as this could easily cost a trick if declarer has the ♦K. The ♦Q holds,

T3 The ♣Q is played from dummy. Partner and declarer both follow low, so you win your ♣A.

What do you do now?

You must study and consider your options with the aim of first doing no harm. What is declarer's trump holding? She likely has the

♥Q, but not the ♥A, or she would probably have played a second round of trumps immediately. In addition, declarer has the ♦K because your partner did not win the ♦Q in dummy. With South rebidding 2♥ over one spade, she is likely to also have the ♠K or the ♠A, but not both, because then she would have a medium opening hand of 15-18 HCP with six hearts and might likely have rebid 3♥ rather than 2♥.

So, what should you play in the West seat? You should play a club. If declarer has the ♠K, it does not hurt the defence. But if declarer has the ♠A and you played a spade away from your king, he could win in the dummy with the ♠Q.

T4 on your ♣4 partner wins her ♠K
T5 Partner returns ♦2. You win ♦A
T6 You play another ♦T which partner ruffs.
T7 She returns the ♠J. Now declarer has a spade loser whether she wins with her ace or ducks and so let's your ♠K win.

Here's the full deal:

	North	
West	♠ Q5432 ♥ 9 ♦ QJ64 ♣ QJT	East
♠ K7 ♥ JT8 ♦ AT98 ♣ A954		♠ JT98 ♥ A32 ♦ 32 ♣ K863
	South (D)	
3NT/S Lead ♥J	♠ A6 ♥ KQ7654 ♦ K75 ♣ 72	Vul EW Dir: S

Thus, your careful and passive defence results in six losers for declarer: the ♥A, the ♦A, a diamond ruff, the ♠AK and a ♠K.

Success! You followed your principle of "first, do no harm" and did not set up any additional tricks for declarer in the trump suit or in the spade suit.

♦ JF – Hand Analysis



Julian Foster (many times NSW representative) analysing (bidding & play) on an interesting hand from a club session. Sourced SBC Wisdom articles.

		North	Dealer: South Vul: Nil	
		♠ T432		
		♥ T9		
		♦ AT52		
		♣ AT8		
			East	
West				
♠ AJ7			♠ Q65	
♥ AJ872			♥ KQ63	
♦ J6			♦ 983	
♣ KQ7			♣ J65	
		South (D)		
		♠ K98		
		♥ 54		
		♦ KQ74		
		♣ 9432		
			NT	
			N - 1 - - -	
			S - 1 - - -	
			E 1 - 3 1 2	
			W 1 - 3 - 2	

On this club game hand, almost all pairs ended up in 4♥ which should go off but was allowed to make several times.

Starting with the auction

I think there are several close decisions for East West. South will open with a pass and West has the first decision. 1♥ or 1NT (assuming you play 15-17 NT)

Personally, I'd open 1NT even though I have a 5-card major and no diamond stop. It describes the hand well overall. It also puts partner in control (i.e., they know whose hand it is). Besides, if you open 1♥ and partner doesn't raise what will you rebid? After a pass from North, East also has a decision.

Even though it doesn't work well on this hand I have a lot of sympathy with passing 1NT. **At matchpoints it's not worth pushing for tight games** and you are so balanced that no-trumps might play as well as a suit. One pair played in 1NT, and I suspect I would have done the same!

There are arguments to stayman though:

- a) Just because your hand is 4333 doesn't mean partner is too – they may have a

doubleton and a ♥ fit (if we have one) will then still play better.

- b) There is a chance partner will have a 5-card major and a 5-4 fit is so much more powerful that you don't want to miss it.

If you do stayman you have another close decision over partner's 2♥ response. Do you pass or invite?

If East does invite, West should definitely accept (the auction **1NT-2♣-2♥-3♥-4♥** was quite common). But I have a lot of sympathy for pass, again because you are so balanced. Indeed, pass is theoretically the right decision because 4♥ should go off – but +140 didn't score so well this time because several pairs allowed 4♥ to make.

If you choose to open 1♥, East will obviously raise but again has a choice. Those playing Bergen raises might choose 3♣ (6-9 with 4 card support). However, being so balanced I think I would just raise to 2♥. West will then make a game invite of some sort and now East should bid game as they have 4♥ when they might have had 3, and they have 8 points in their 6-9 range).

Let's turn to the **play and defence** in 4♥.

There are 2 clear diamond losers and the ♣A so it all revolves around the spade suit.

Most Norths led a spade (see advanced section for more discussion about which one). As so often the play at trick 1 determines the fate of the contract.

Suppose North leads the ♠T. Declarer should play low (there is no point covering as you are missing both the 9 and 8 – remember the only reason to cover is to promote lower cards in your hands into tricks later). South should also play low. Why? Because one of the most basic rules for defenders is do not underlead an ace against a suit contract. Therefore, South **knows** West has the ♠A. They also have the ♠J (partner's ♠T denies it). So, if South does put the ♠K up declarer will score the ♠AQJ and will make 10 tricks losing just 2 diamonds and the ♣A.

When South plays low declarer's ♠J scores at trick 1. But after that declarer can only make 1 more spade trick (South will cover the ♠Q if it is led, otherwise they play the ♠9) and will go 1 off in 4♥.

Suppose now that North leads the ♠4. South again knows the ♠A is with West, but it's not immediately so clear where the ♠J is. In fact, South can work out West has the ♠J too - see advanced section for how. So again, South should only play the ♠K if declarer puts the ♠Q up from dummy.

The key to getting these positions right is twofold:

- a) Never do something that definitely cannot work (i.e., play the ♠K here) - the alternative MIGHT make no difference, but it **MIGHT be better**.
- b) Remember that honours should generally be used to cover other honours (so here you should hold back the ♠K to cover dummy's ♠Q).

Key points to note

- Opening 1NT with a 5-card major is generally fine if it describes your hand well overall.
- There are many situations where there is not a clear cut "right" bid on a hand. 2 or 3 options are possible and obviously on any one hand any of those might prove best.
- Just because you have 4 card support for partner's major doesn't mean you HAVE to make a Bergen raise. Very flat hands don't play as well and may only be worth an initial raise to 2.
- Honour cards in defence should generally be used to cover other honours. Putting them up "into thin air" is virtually never right.

At trick 1 when your partner makes the opening lead, try to place the cards in that suit. You will be amazed how often you can almost work out the entire suit layout (see advanced section)!

More advanced

When leading it is useful to play a method that tells partner if you have an honour or not. Many pairs play "2nd and 4th". What that means is they lead 4th highest from suits with honours. But when they don't have an honour, they lead 2nd highest. So, from 8763 for example they would lead the 7 (and on the next round play the 3rd highest – i.e., the 6). Partner will usually be able to tell which it is by considering what other spot cards are visible (or, in some cases, from the auction).

Does the 10 count as an honour for these purposes? Opinions vary and it's something worth discussing with your partner. Here, if it does, you would lead ♠2 but, if it does not you would lead ♠4. In my 2 most regular partnerships we treat the 10 as an honour in one and we don't in the other! Another variation you see is that people treat the 10 as an honour in a suit but not in no-trumps (or vice-versa). As I frequently say - it is far more important to agree what your partnership does than what it actually is! Once you know your agreement you can work out what holdings partner can and cannot have in any given situation.

If North leads ♠4, let's see what South can work out here. Start by imagining it is 4th highest (which is probably the natural instinct with a 4 that looks low). The cards higher than the 4 which South cannot see are A,J,T,7.

Rule 1 is do not underlead an ace against a suit contract. So, South knows West has ♠A. Which means if the 4 were 4th highest North would have led it from J1074(32). But would you lead the 4 from that? No, neither would I. I would lead the ♠J.

Therefore, South can work out that isn't the position. Hence the 4 is NOT a 4th highest lead. Hence its most likely to be 2nd highest (it cannot be from shortage as that would give West 5 spades, but they opened 1♥). Now South knows it's 2nd highest that means they also know North does not have an honour -

so ♠J is also with West. The only remaining 4 card holdings are ♠T432 or ♠7432.

If you treat the ♠T as an honour then in fact the only holding possible from which the 4 would be led is ♠7432.

If you don't treat the ♠T as an honour then both are still possible.

But the key on this hand is to work out that West has ♠AJ or ♠AT. Once you know that you know playing the ♠K on anything other than dummy's ♠Q will give declarer 3 spade tricks. Playing low MIGHT still let them make 3 spades (e.g., if the lead is from 7432 because declarer now has ♠AJT and your ♠K is just the victim of a simple finesse) but it MIGHT hold declarer to 2 spades – as it does here.

So, you should of course make the play that might gain. The more times you see positions like this the more this sort of thinking becomes easier. It is amazing how often you can work out the layout of a suit almost entirely just from a single lead!

Note that some Norths led the ♠T. That is sometimes done to make it clearer that you don't have anything in the suit (North may be concerned partner isn't going to be able to read the ♠4).

It makes little difference here, but it can be dangerous to squander a relatively high card like a ♠T early on.

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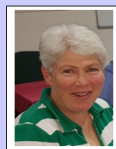
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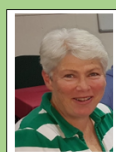
Date	Lesson Topic
Wed July 13	Gentle hand analysis 10
No more lessons until September 14	

Visitors \$20; Members \$17

For more information or to register, email Anita: ac210927@bigpond.net.au

NSBC Intermediate July 2022 Program

Online Fridays at 9.30am with Anita Curtis



Broaden Your Game (BYG): aspiring intermediate players who play in Rookies or Restricted.

Intermediate: aspiring open players or those with considerable experience in Restricted.

Date	Lesson Topic	Description
1 July	"It's the small things in bidding" - Online	Intermediate bidding: tips & easy conventions that will make a difference to bidding for intermediate players.
8 July	The Losing Trick Count - online	The Losing Trick Count is a great way to check how to evaluate your hand when you have a fit. BYG/Intermediate
15 July	Hand analysis - online	8 hands to bid, play & defend for BYG & intermediate players.
24 Jun	Signals part 4 Series 1: Putting it all together - online	After a quick recap of attitude, suit preference & count, bid and play 8 hands that will test your ability to signal your partner! BYG/Intermediate

Visitors \$20; Members \$17

For more information or to register, email Anita: ac210927@bigpond.net.au

Build on the Basics – with Jessica Brake



These lessons are suitable for those who have been playing for around 3 months – 1 year or have come back to bridge after a long break.

There are 20 topics in total – upcoming topics are listed below. Attend all lessons, or just the ones that interest you!

Date	Topic
July 28	NT Openings and Planning NT contracts
Aug 4	Opener's No-Trump Rebids
Aug 11	Holding up STOPPERS in No-Trumps
Aug 18	Finesses and Supporting Opener's Major

For information or to sign up email jessicabrakebridge@gmail.com



Visitors \$ 20
Members \$ 17

Join "live" on Zoom –
Thurs 9:30am – 11:30am
OR watch in your own time!

Each week you will be sent:

- 1) Recording of the lesson
- 2) Lesson notes
- 3) Quiz