

Bridge Club 3/7 Hands and Analysis
Theme of the Week: **Endplay**

The theme of this week is called “Endplay”. An “Endplay” is a trick near the end of the hand where you lose on purpose in order to get more tricks back. We should think of an Endplay in two parts: the **elimination** and **throw-in**. Elimination means playing cards in the side suits so the opponents can no longer lead those suits safely and must lead a suit that helps you. Throw-in means that once you have eliminated all the safe options you give the lead to the opponents and force them to make a bad decision.

The first hand is the simpler of the two examples:

Board : 2

Dealer : E ♠ 9 8 7 6 5

Vuln : N-S ♥ A 10

♦ K J 2

♣ K Q 3

♠ 3 2

♥ K J 6

♦ 9 6 4 3

♣ J 8 7 6

N

W

2

E

S

♠ 4

♥ Q 9 8 7 5 4

♦ Q 8 7

♣ 10 9 4

♠ A K Q J 10

♥ 3 2

♦ A 10 5

♣ A 5 2

The bidding: The deal is East and East has less than 6 points so they pass. South has a very strong hand with 18 high card points and 5 spades. Therefore South wants to open 1S. West and East do not have enough strength to bid so they will be passing for the remainder of the auction.

Using our bidding sheet, North's bid would bid 4S which should 12+ points and 3+ spades because North wants to reach game in spades. South should realize they there is a possibility for slam if North has the A♥.

The way South learns if North has the A♥ is by bidding 4NT. According to the bidding sheet, 4NT is 1430 Blackwood. As a summary, there are 5 “Keycards” to be worried about which are the 4 Aces and the K of trump.

The responses are as follows: 5♣ shows 1 or 4 keycards, 5♦ shows 3 or 0 keycards, 5♥ shows 2 or 5 keycards without the Q of trump, 5♠ shows 2 or 5 keycards with the Q of trump. For this hand, North has 1 keycard and would bid 5C showing 1 keycard. South can immediately recognize that it is the A♥. South then notices that they have all the Aces, the K of trump and the Queen of trump (spades). Therefore South can safely bid 6S.

As a recap, the auction was 1♠-4♠-4NT-5♣-6♠.

Declarer: We are going to assume that the defense lead a heart against 6♠.

When South sees dummy, they should immediately count their tricks. Being in 6♠ means that you need 12 tricks in order to make the contract.

South can see 5 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds, and 3 clubs for 11 total tricks. The most apparent place for a 12th trick is the diamond suit. Using just past week’s lessons about finessing, South may guess to finesse for the 12th trick. This is only a 50% chance of succeeding. There is a 100% way to make this contract using the concept of an “endplay”.

The first thing we have to do is win the AH and then begin to plan our play.

Let’s see how this works. The first concept was “elimination” where you play other suits than the danger suit (diamond). First start with drawing trump so the opponents cannot trump any of your winners. In addition, the spades have been “eliminated” from the opponents hands. Then play the A♣, K♣, and Q♣. We now have “eliminated” the club suit from both the North and South hands. Now the final suit to “eliminate” is hearts. This will also act as our “throw-in”. Once the clubs and spades are played, play the second heart. Now the hearts are eliminated from North and South as well.

Whoever wins the heart is now screwed. They have been endplayed. Let’s go through their options.

- 1) Lead another heart. If the defender leads a third heart, you can trump in one hand and discard a diamond in the other so you don’t even have to worry about finessing.
- 2) Lead another club. This is the exact same concept as 1). You can trump in one hand and discard a diamond in the other. Trumping the third diamond becomes trick 12.
- 3) Lead a diamond. As long as you play small as the second hand you will be fine. If the third player plays the Q, you win with your A or K (depending on which hand), and now the J becomes trick 12. If the third player doesn’t play the Q, your 10 or J becomes the 12th trick immediately since it will win this first diamond trick

Whatever the defender does, they will give you the 12th trick you need to make your contract!!

The second hand follows a similar example of the endplay. The way this diagram is read by Spades are the top suit, hearts the second, diamonds, the third, and clubs are the bottom.

	10976	
	Q87	
	K87	
	A64	
QJ82		----
J109		5432
643		J1092
1098		QJ752
	AK543	
	AK6	
	AQ5	
	K3	

Bidding: Let's say that South is the dealer here. South has 23 points, which is enough to open 2♣ which shows 22 or more points. After South opens 2♣, North bids 2♦ which is called a "waiting" bid which just allows South to describe their hand more.

South has a perfect bid of 2NT which shows 22-24 BAL. Then North can bid 3♣ as Stayman which asks opener for a 4 card or longer major, hoping to find South with 4 spades. South bids 3♠ and North is elated.

North counts 9 points in their hand and 22-24 from partner which is enough for slam. Partner can bid 4NT to ask for Aces or Kings or just bid 6♠. Either way North-South should end up in 6 spades.

Review of auction: 2♣-2♦-2NT-3♣-3♠-4NT-5♣(showing 4 keycards)-6♠

Declarer: Let us say that West leads a heart (anything but a spade is best for the defense).

Declarer can count 2 spades, 3 hearts, 3 diamonds, and 2 clubs for 10 tricks. We need 12 tricks and those will come from the spade suit.

Win the first trick and then play the A♠. You will discover the bad spade break (4-0) and will have to re-think on how to play the hand. If spades were 2-2 or 3-1 this contract would be a lot easier. In the case the spades were 2-2, the A and K would draw all the opponents trump and you would have the rest of the tricks (making 7S!). If the spades are 3-1 you can play the A and K of spades and then a little spade to give up the last spade. You will have 12 tricks and make 6S.

The problem arises when the spades are 4-0. Here if you play the A and K of spades, West will now be able to win BOTH the Q and J for down 1.

The point of the whole hand is that you can't let West win both the Q and J of spades otherwise you will go down. So let's apply the same concept of "elimination" and see what happens. After seeing the bad spade break, play all your hearts, diamonds, and clubs (trumping the third club in your hand).

Declarer's last three cards will be the A54 of spades. West will have the QJ8 of spades, and North will have the 1097 of spades. East's cards do not matter.

We have "eliminated" all the other suits so now we can play the 10S from dummy and small from our hand. This is the "throw-in". West now has two options, win or don't take it. If West doesn't take it, we then cash the AS and all West gets is the last spade and we make our contract. If West does take it, then they are screwed.

West's last two cards are the Q8. Dummy has 97 and Declarer has the A5. If West plays the Q, declarer wins and the 9 is high. If West plays the 8, dummy plays the 9 and then the A takes the last trick.

The endplay is an advanced technique and it is okay if it's confusing. Let me know if you have any questions about by emailing me at umdbridge@gmail.com