

Lecture Notes Feb. 11

The Hold-Up Play

North (Dummy)		
♠4 ♥543 ♦543 ♣KQJ1098		
Contract: 3NT-South		
West is on lead.		
South (Declarer)		
♠AK2 ♥AK2 ♦AK62 ♣432		
West		East
♠QJ109 ♥QJ109 ♦QJ109 ♣5		♠87653 ♥876 ♦87 ♣A76

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This week's theme is about defense and what we can do to stop declarer. It is West's lead and it does not matter which suit they lead, since they are all equivalent (as long as it is not clubs). As a general principle, we want to lead the top of sequence: a sequence is defined as consecutive honor cards, such as AK, KQ, or QJ10 like we have here. This helps partner out because once we lead the Q, they know we have the J and can play accordingly.

Once, they lead, dummy comes down and declarer must make their plan. Declarer sees 2 tricks in spades, 2 tricks in hearts, 2 tricks and diamonds, and 5 potential tricks in clubs (once the A♣ is gone). Starting with 6 tricks with a possibility of 11 is a great position for declarer, as South.

Therefore, declarer must be thinking about what could go wrong. The only way that declarer does not the the 9 tricks needed for 3NT is if they only take 2 club tricks, and not the 5 potential tricks. What South wants to happen is to win the first trick from whatever West lead and play a club immediately. They want to see a defender take their A♣ and then all the rest of dummy's clubs are now high.

As defenders, we must be cognizant of declarer's plan. As East, the only points you have in your hand is the A♣, but it is the most important card in the deck. The hold-up play is what prevents declarer from taking their nine tricks. To achieve this, East must wait, or hold-up on taking their A♣. If East waits until the third round, then South won't have any more clubs left to reach dummy. This is really important since there are no other ways to enter to dummy since the highest card that is not a club is a 5. Declarer will be limited to 2 spades, hearts, diamonds, and clubs for 8 tricks and therefore down 1.