

Giving Declarer a Losing Option

By

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Here is an ending that occurred in a recent CBF Online Championship match. Declarer had to hold his club losers to one. Dummy held ♣K932 and declarer ♣J4. LHO led a small club, what club should declarer play from dummy?

In order to solve this problem there are a few more questions that need to be answered: Could West have switched to a different suit? Does the bidding or play give you any clues? Assuming you have no other info, and West had a safe card they could have played, put up the king! Why? If you had to lead the suit yourself, the only hope was the ace in front of the king. West defended well by giving declarer a losing option, hoping declarer would play him for the queen. Try this one:

Ex 2: Defending against a suit contract, declarer has enough trumps to set up the heart suit by ruffing the 3rd round. Can you do anything?

Dummy

♥ A K 10 9 3

Partner

♥ 8 7 6

You

♥ Q J 2

Declarer

♥ 5 4

It's a longshot, but you could play the jack or the queen on the 1st round of hearts. Declarer may play you for a true card and take a finesse on the 2nd round of the suit.

Ex 3: Defending against a notrump contract, declarer needs six heart tricks to make. Can you do anything?

Dummy

♥ A K J 9 7 3

Partner

♥ 8 6 2

You

♥ Q 10

Declarer

♥ 5 4

Declarer is likely going to play for ♥Qxx on side. However they will cash off the ace first, in case East has a stiff queen, in which case they can finesse against the 10 on the 2nd round of the suit. If you woodenly follow with the 10 on the first round, they have no chance for six heart tricks unless you hold Q10 doubleton. Smoothly play the queen on the 1st round and declarer will finesse the 9 on the 2nd round and you will score your ten.

Ex 4:

♠ 10 3 2
♥ Q 8 7 6
♦ 5 4 3
♣ 10 6 5

♠ A Q J 9 8 7 4
♥ K
♦ 8 7
♣ A K Q


The bidding:

West	North	East	South
2♦	Pass	Pass	4♠

All Pass

West leads the ♥10. East wins the ace and shifts to the ♦K. West overtakes, cashes the ♦Q, and returns the ♥9. Plan the play.

Despite dummy's lack of high cards you can make your contract by picking up spades. The finesse is the standard option missing the king, but it is wrong here. Why? Because of the defence. Why didn't West just continue with the ♦J? Why did they give you a sure entry, considering there is a good chance your ♥K was a singleton? The reason: West wanted you to take the spade finesse. The full deal:

	♠ 10 3 2 ♥ Q 8 7 6 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ 10 6 5		
♠ K ♥ 10 9 ♦ A Q J 10 9 6 ♣ 9 8 4 2			♠ 6 5 ♥ A J 5 4 3 2 ♦ K 2 ♣ J 7 3
	♠ A Q J 9 8 7 4 ♥ K ♦ 8 7 ♣ A K Q		

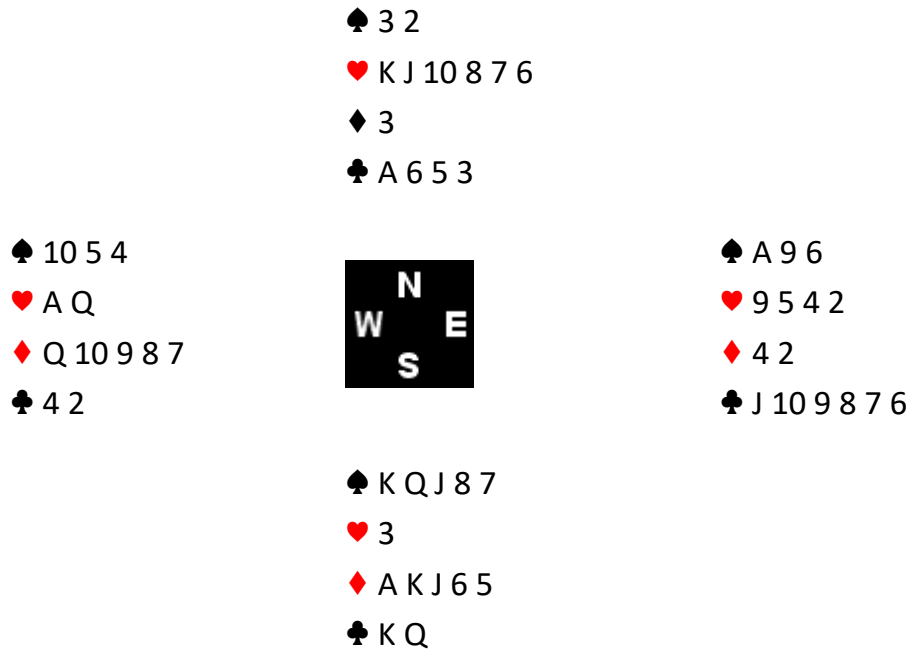
So on defence you want to be aware of the opportunity to ‘come bearing gifts’ that may cause declarer to go wrong, when they were bound to succeed otherwise. One last example:

Ex 5: The bidding:

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	3♥	Pass	4♦
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

You are West. What do you lead from ♠ 1054 ♥AQ ♦Q10987 ♣42?

The normal strategy when sitting with good cards in declarer's 2nd suit is to lead trumps. However this defence is dangerous. Why? You are concerned about the favourable layout of the hearts, North's suit. If declarer is given no chance of ruffing diamonds, they will try to set up the hearts, which you know will work. Best lead is a club, letting declarer try to ruff a diamond, which will fail, and allow partner to hopefully overruff dummy. The full deal:



On a club lead declarer will likely win, play ♦A ruff a diamond, club to their hand and a 3rd round of diamonds. If diamonds split declarer is in great shape. After ruffing a 2nd diamond, they can throw a heart on the ♣A, ruff a heart and play the ♠K, making 10 tricks. However on the actual deal, East will overruff dummy, and there are several fairly easy paths for the defence to score four tricks.

However, on a trump lead and continuation declarer is desperate. They will pull trump and then play a heart. Surprise!! The favourable heart situation now leads to an effortless 11 tricks!

