

April 2021 ACBL Bulletin Notes

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Page 48, "Card Play 101," by Phillip Alder – *Suit-preference signal*

	♠ QJ94 ♥ 1076 ♦ AK52 ♣ 83		
♠ 2 ♥ AKQJ85 ♦ J107 ♣ AQ6	N W + E S	♠ 653 ♥ 2 ♦ 984 ♣ J109742	
	♠ AK1087 ♥ 943 ♦ Q63 ♣ K5		
West (You) North East South			
2♥	3♥ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	1♠
All Pass			3♠
(1) Cuebid raise: spade support with at least game-invitational strength			

Deal 1

You cash the ♥AK; partner shows out on the second heart lead.

When you count the high-card points, you have 17, dummy has 10, and South opened. That leaves 0 for East. You need five tricks to set the contract. That means you have to reach West. So, you lead the ♥5, your lowest heart, which partner will ruff. Partner knows this is a suit-preference situation and realizes the ♥5 is low, asking him to switch to the lowest non-trump suit. Partner leads back a club and you make your ♣AQ to set the contract.

Page 56, "Mike's Bridge Lesson," by Mike Lawrence – *Consider the auction*

West led the ♥K, East overtook with the ace and returned the ♥2 to the ♥Q. West plays a third heart.

Declarer must ruff high as East is surely ruffing. If the defense is allowed three heart tricks, you will almost surely lose a diamond and go down.

Now, you must play the contract for no spade losers with only two high spades. You know from West's 2♠ Michael's bid that he has five hearts and at least five of a minor. So, he has at most three cards in spades and the short minor.

You have a choice between trying to drop the ♠J or to finesse it. The old axiom, "eight ever, nine never" might indicate the drop. "Eight ever, nine never" suggests that when holding eight cards and only two top honors, you finesse for the missing honor and when holding nine cards and only two top honors, you play for the 2-2 split and the drop.

	♠ KQ54 ♥ 65 ♦ J1075 ♣ K93		
♠ 7 ♥ KQ874 ♦ K3 ♣ J10652	N W + E S	♠ J83 ♥ A2 ♦ Q9642 ♣ Q84	
	♠ A10962 ♥ J1093 ♦ A8 ♣ A7		
West North East South			
2♠	4♠	All Pass	1♠

Axioms are useful when you have no other information and are simply making a percentage play. However, in this situation, you have a lot of information. West has at most three cards outside his two long suits. They are likely to be split 2-1. Singletons are popular leads against suit contracts and West did not lead one. In fact, West led a card that would NOT win the trick. Therefore, it is likely (but not guaranteed) that he does not have a singleton in his short minor.

Cash the SQ in case the Jack is stiff. When the Jack doesn't fall, finesse for it. It is likely that West is now void in spades and the finesse will be successful. (The less likely and less successful possibility is that West has Jxx in spades).

Page 57, "Chalk Talk," by Eddie Kantar - It doesn't go away

	♠ K74		
	♥ 764		
	♦ 653		
	♣ A752		
♠ J8	N	♠ 1093	
♥ 10983	W † E	♥ AK52	
♦ J9	S	♦ Q1082	
♣ Q10943		♣ J6	
	♠ AQ652		
	♥ QJ		
	♦ AK74		
	♣ K8		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♥T, East takes the ace and king and returns a third heart, which you ruff.

You are sure of losing at least one diamond. If they split 3-3, that's all you will lose as your fourth diamond will be good. As they split 3-3 only 36% of the time, you would like to improve the odds of making the contract. Your only play to improve your odds is to ruff your fourth diamond. Because if they split 4-2 or worse, you will lose that second diamond – hence the topic of this column.

First, pull two rounds of spades (AK or KQ), but not a third round. Leave one trump out. You hope to pull it later with a high trump from your hand.

Then play a small diamond and let the defense have the trick. Then win the return and cash the ♦AK. Then

ruff your third diamond. Sure, the defense may overruff, and down you go. But you were going down anyway if they didn't split.

What you are playing for is a hand similar to the one shown, where the hand with two diamonds also has only two spades and can no longer ruff.

Course, sometimes the hand with two diamonds will have the third spade and ruff your good diamond. But then you will get to ruff your last diamond – breaking even, trading a diamond trick for a diamond ruff.

This line doesn't guarantee you'll make your contract. It just gives you a better chance than relying solely on the 3-3 diamond break. If you got the 3-3 diamond break, then you would pull the last trump after the third round of diamonds.