

A Hand From the Bridge Center

I have received various requests to illustrate some hands and how to think about them at the table. This was a hand from Monday night.

Playing two over one you open one spade with this hand:

QJ9xxx
AKxx
K10
A

Partner bids 1 no trump. What is your call? This is the classic tweener hand. With a fit this hand evaluates into a monster. Without a fit you may be overbidding with aggressive action. What would you bid?

I tried 3 hearts. With 6 four hands it is recommended that you bid the four card suit rather than showing a six card suit. What should partner do? On this hand it was a no brainer. Here is partner's hand.

K
10xxx
Qxx
QJxxx

My partner Helen Rolfe, who currently made Life Master in San Francisco, bid 4 hearts. Suppose Helen had only three hearts and two spades instead of one? Then Helen should have tried 4 spades in case I had 6 spades (or by agreement with partner a bid of 3NT could show two spades in this sequence).

K
10xxx
Qxx
QJxxx

QJ9xxx
AKxx
K10
A

Opening lead 7 of clubs.

Many people in the room may have been in 4 spades. However, in 4 hearts you have a chance to shine. With a seven of clubs lead you play small from dummy. Why? You want a club return on this hand. So leave your options open. Let's look at the hand. Where are your losers?

1. You have to lose at least one heart unless the hearts are 3 – 2 with someone having the doubleton QJ (wishful thinking)
2. You have a diamond loser
3. You have a spade loser

Where is your source of tricks? The spades suit is a good source of tricks. Some might argue to duck a trump. That helps keep control but a sharp defender may play a second trump. Maybe that miracle doubleton was there all along. That would really feel bad. I decided to go for the cold top. I played a spade to the king. Now comes the key moment of the hand. Please do not lead a diamond! My right hand opponent leads a club towards my queen jack in dummy. I ruff small. What next? I play the Ace and King of hearts, leaving one winning trump in my right handed opponent's hand. Now I start playing high spades. The queen and jack are used to pitch two diamonds. Now I play spade number 4 and pitch my last diamond. My right handed opponent is helpless. He can ruff whenever he wants but I will be able to claim for making 5.

This hand really effectively points out the advantages of four - four fits. I was able to use the extra spades for pitches.