# THINKING BRIDGE - - By Eddie Kantar

(From - NABC -Spring 2018 - Philadelphia - 3 )

**Responding to 1NT, third-hand play, holdup play**

Dlr: East
Vul: None

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | ♠7 5 2<br>♥A 8 7 2<br>♦Q 5 3<br>♣K J 5 | |
| ♠J 10 9 6 4<br>♥Q J 6<br>♦A 7 2<br>♣9 6 | | ♠K 8<br>♥10 9 3<br>♦K 4<br>♣10 8 7 4 3 2 |
| | ♠A Q 3<br>♥K 5 4<br>♦J 10 9 8 6<br>♣A Q | |

| *West* | *North* | *East* | *South* |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Pass | 1NT |
| Pass | 3NT | All Pass | |

Opening lead: ♠J

Bidding commentary: North opts, correctly in my opinion, not to use Stayman with this distribution.

Lead commentary: What else?

Defensive commentary: As East, play the ♠K at trick one for two reasons. (1) to unblock the suit for partner's greater length; (2) partner might be leading from an A-J-10 combination, in which case you may be able to take the first five spade tricks!

General Third-Hand Rule to Live By: When partner leads an honor card and third hand has a doubleton honor, it is almost always right to overtake or unblock the honor. In other words, play it!

Play commentary: As South, you have two stoppers in the suit that has been led, and two high cards to drive out: the ♦A and ♦K. This scenario calls for a first-round holdup play. Look at the deal closely to see why. If you win the first spade and lead a diamond, East wins and returns the ♠8. Now it is too late to hold up. West overtakes, clears spades and eventually gets in with the ♦A to cash the setting tricks in spades. You lose three spades and two diamonds. Now back up to trick one and duck the ♠K, win the spade return and lead a high diamond. If East wins, guess what? East has no spade to return and you have time to drive out the ♦A while you have another spade stopper. If West wins the first diamond and clears spades, East has no spade to lead when he gets in with the ♦K.

Words to live by: As declarer, when holding two stoppers in the suit they lead (say, spades) and two high cards to drive out (say two aces or perhaps an ace and a king in the same suit) duck the first trick, win the second and drive out one of the missing high cards. If either opponent started with a doubleton in the suit they attacked, and the two entries are split, you are home. The player with the doubleton is out of that suit and unable to return it when on lead.