

ThinkingBridge by Eddie Kantar

NABC Spring 2018 Philadelphia 5

Hand evaluation, third-hand play, reading the cards, deception

Dlr: South	♠ 10 3			
Vul: N-S	♥ 8 7 6			
	♦ Q 7 3			
	♣ A Q J 6 5			
♠ K 8 6 5 2			♠ A 7 4	
♥ J 9 3			♥ Q 10 5 2	
♦ J 9 4			♦ 10 8 6 2	
♣ 8 7			♣ K 4	
	♠ Q J 9			
	♥ A K 4			
	♦ A K 5			
	♣ 10 9 3 2			
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>	
			INT	
Pass	3NT	All Pass		

Opening lead: 5

Bidding commentary: As North, you can tack on 2 extra points holding a five-card suit headed by the A-K-Q, A-K-J, A-Q-J, A-Q-10 or K-Q-J facing a known balanced hand. Add 1 extra point with a five-card suit headed by three slightly weaker honors: A-J-10, K-Q-10, K-J-10 or Q-J-10.

Defensive commentary: As East, win the A and return the 7, the higher of two remaining cards.

Play commentary: As South, fearing that West might duck the second spade, thus retaining communications with East, you might try a little subterfuge. One possibility is to play the 9 and then the queen, concealing the jack. Another is to play the jack and then the queen, concealing the 9.

Defensive commentary: As West, no matter how South plays her spades, go by the card your partner returns to get an honest count. If South plays the 9 and Q and those are South's only two spades, partner has started with the A J 7 4 and would (should) have returned the 4, the lowest of three remaining cards. If South plays the jack and queen, concealing the 9, it shouldn't work. If the jack and queen are honest cards, East started with the A 9 7 4 and would have returned the 4. The bottom line is that you should duck the second spade because declarer remains with a high spade and you want to keep a spade in partner's hand in case partner has an early entry.

Play commentary: As South, if West ducks the second spade, there is not much you can do other than take the club finesse. No luck this time. East wins and returns the 4, allowing West to cash three spades and defeat the contract one trick. After you make an opening lead and partner wins and returns your suit, watch the spot cards closely so you know what is going on. Remember, partner returns the higher of two remaining cards and the lowest of three remaining cards. That should help.