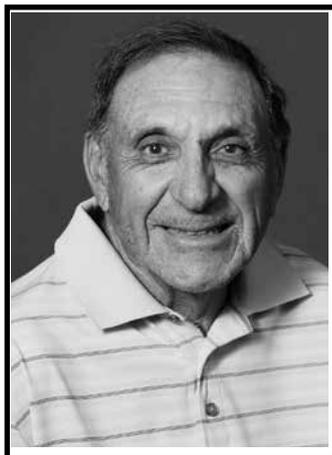


Counting your tricks. The avoidance play. Which finesse? Defensive discarding



Dir: South		♠ 7 3 2	
Vul: None		♥ K J 8	
		♦ 7 4	
		♣ A J 6 5 2	
♠ A Q 8 6 4		♠ 10 5	
♥ Q 5 4 3 2		♥ 10 9 7	
♦ 5		♦ J 10 9 8 6	
♣ 8 7		♣ Q 10 9	
		♠ K J 9	
		♥ A 6	
		♦ A K Q 3 2	
		♣ K 4 3	
West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All Pass	2NT
Opening lead: ♠6			

Lead commentary:

As West, a strong lead against notrump is low from A-Q-x-x-x-(x).

If partner has the jack or can get in and lead through declarer's probable king, you have a good chance of taking a bundle of tricks. The returns are not nearly as great when leading low from A-Q-x-x.

Defensive commentary: As West, when the ♠10 at trick loses to the jack, South is marked with the ♠K J 9. Partner's ♠10 denies both the 9 and the king.

Play commentary: As South, you have eight top tricks and the idea is to set up a ninth without allowing East, the danger hand, in to push a spade through your vulnerable ♠K 9. You should know that West has the A-Q from East's third-hand play of the 10. It must be right to start with the ♦A and ♦K. No luck there when West discards a heart on the second diamond. You remain with a choice of two queen finesses for your ninth trick. When you have a choice of two queen finesses, play the ace and then the king of the longer suit (clubs in this case). If the queen doesn't drop, take a finesse in the shorter suit, hearts. If you do that, you survive this diabolical layout.

Defensive commentary #2: As East, when declarer leads a high diamond, play the ♦J, conventionally showing partner a sequence headed by the jack. As West, when discarding on the second diamond, discard from length (hearts), not shortness (clubs). If you discard from a doubleton and then show out on the second round of the suit, declarer knows partner's exact holding in that suit. It's called giving away the show – and drives partners crazy!