

Thinking bridge

By Eddie Kantar

Defense to 2♣ opening. The opening lead. Dealing with two-way suits. Counting.

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

Bidding commentary: As East, take advantage of the vulnerability and preempt as high as you dare before the 2♣ bidder has a chance to express the nature of the hand. As North, with two aces facing a 2♣ opener, slam should be right around the corner. Your 4♣ cuebid shows slam interest in hearts. As South, after North bids 4♣, you have an easy 4NT bid. When partner shows two aces, bid 7♥. You can practically count 13 tricks: five hearts, three diamonds, one spade and a great chance for four club tricks.

Lead commentary: As West, no singleton leads (unless partner has bid the suit) against a voluntarily bid grand slam! Partner can't have the ace and your lead might chew up the jack, queen, or both in your now-unhappy partner's hand. The lead of a singleton against a small slam has more to gain. If partner has the ace of the singleton suit or the ace of trumps, you get a ruff. However, if you have an ace, forget a singleton lead against a voluntarily bid slam.

Play commentary: As South, the fly in the ointment is a possible 4-1 break in clubs. The idea is to try to discover which opponent, if either, has four-card club length. Think counting. Win the ♠A, draw three trumps ending in dummy and ruff a spade. When West follows up the line, play West for three spades and East for six. When counting, it makes life so much easier if you count the hand of the player with the known long suit, East in this case. East has six spades and has turned up with two hearts, already eight known cards. Next, cash your diamonds, saving clubs, your key suit, for last. When East turns up with one diamond, she must have four clubs, leaving West with a singleton. Cash the ♠K, cross to the ♠A, West showing out as expected, and lead a club to the 9. There is no substitute for counting.