

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

DECISION AT TRICK ONE

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ 32 ♥ KQ9 ♦ Q9832 ♣ A32	
♠ AKT76 ♥ JT763 ♦ 4 ♣ 76	North West East Declarer	♠ 98 ♥ 82 ♦ A765 ♣ QJ985
	♠ QJ54 ♥ A54 ♦ KJT ♣ KT4	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	2♣	2♥	Pass
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

West's 2♣ was a Michaels Cue-Bid, showing 5-5 (or better) in the majors. North's 2♥ said "I have something in Hearts and a decent hand", and South took a shot at 3NT. What would you lead from the West hand? And how would you declare 3NT?

It would not be a good idea for West to lead a high Spade here. He has no entries outside the Spade suit, and playing Spades from the top would serve only to cut the communications between East and West. The best chance for getting the suit going is for West to lead his fourth-best Spade, hoping that East can profitably lead a Spade through Declarer later in the play. So, West leads the Spade Seven, East plays the Eight, and the key point in the play has already arrived. As Declarer, what would you play on this trick?

If you grab that first Spade trick with your Queen, then you must hope that West has the ♦A, because if East has that card he will fire back a Spade through your inadequate holding. Conversely, if you duck the first Spade, the defense will persist with Spades, knocking out your stopper. In that case, you must hope that East has ♦A, and that West's last Spade is therefore shut out.

So, to play the Spades correctly at Trick 1, it is necessary to deduce who has the ♦A. And the answer is? Yes, East must have it. West is marked with the ♠AK from the play at Trick 1, and can hardly have the ♦A as well. Remember, he passed originally, and would not have done so with Ace-King, Ace and 5-5 distribution. It's like they always say: "It pays to think at Trick 1, it may be too late at Trick 2"

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