

**Logic, Intuition and Instinct
at the
BRIDGE
TABLE**

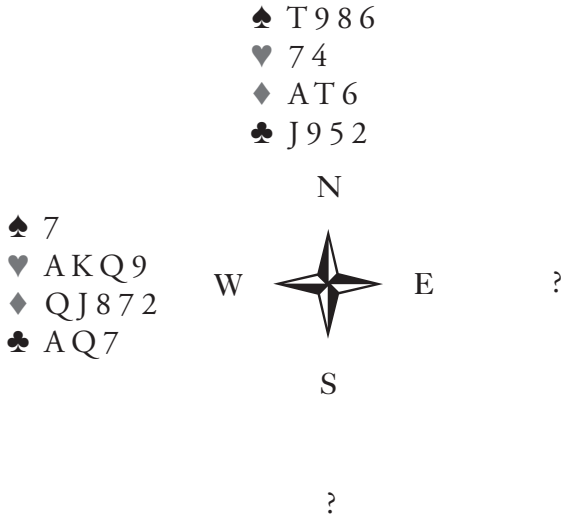
R. JAYARAM

obtaining a count at trick 2

IT WAS SUBHASH GUPTA, a double international — he has played for Canada as well as India — who not only gave me this deal, but also a twenty minute discourse on the nuances of counting. The deal occurred during the Indian Masters' Event in February, 2001, a prelude to the Indian Team Selection Trials.

NS Vulnerable

Dealer South



WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
DBL	2♠	P	3♦*
P	4♠	All	Pass

*Help Suit trial

You are West and you lead Heart Ace to have a look at the Dummy. Partner shows an even number of cards, most probably four in this case. What next?

Most players would continue Hearts, collecting the first two tricks, and then wait for the setting trick to materialize in Clubs later. While Declarer did make the help suit trial bid in Diamonds —

probably, not certainly, denying anything of value in Clubs — is there any means of knowing what his hand pattern is?

That seems to be the key to whole deal. If partner holds King, Ten to four or five Clubs, there seems to be no way this contract can be made. Unless . . . you open up Diamonds, which you will not.

There appears to be something else in this deal which keeps coming to you, but which does not come to you fully. Declarer does not seem to hold much in the side suits except perhaps Diamond King. Still, he makes a game try. It probably means he has a solid Spade suit, possibly six cards. What about the Club pips on the table? Is there something? . . . yes, there is!

If you cash your second Heart trick and exit with a trump (or the third Heart, it makes no difference), Declarer can draw trumps, eliminate the third Heart if it is not done already and exit with a Club, producing the ten-spot from his hand. If you win, you will have to perforce play a second Club. If you play a small Club, the Nine will be put up from the table and Declarer has the two entries needed to ruff out your second Club honor. If your second Club is an honor, Declarer can take the ruffing finesse of Club King. On the other hand, if partner wins the first Club and opens up Diamonds, Declarer will hop up with the King. He will then run his Spades to execute a simple Diamond-Club squeeze on you.

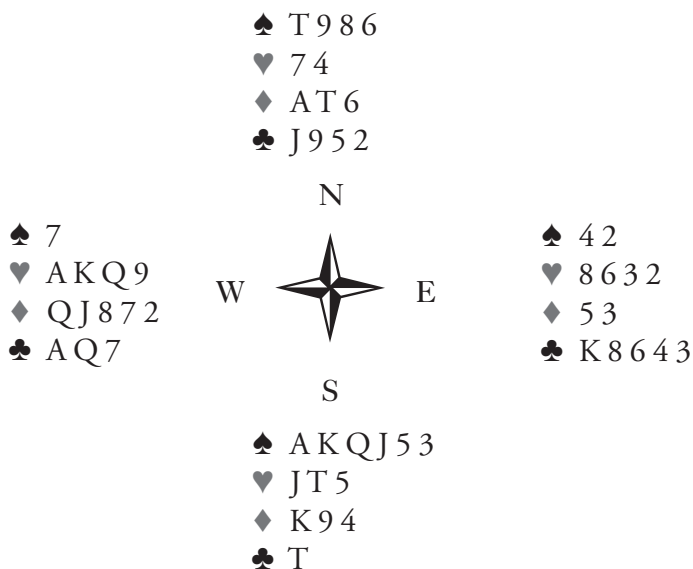
The second Heart trick cannot disappear anywhere.

The neat solution to the whole thing is for you to play a trump at Trick 2, without cashing the second Heart. Partner's card will confirm that Declarer has six Spades. If Declarer draws trumps and then plays a Club, you have no problem at all. You can cash your second Heart and exit with a third one, knowing fully well that Club Jack cannot be established. If Declarer plays the second Heart, you can win, cash your Club Ace confidently and exit with the third Heart, which means Declarer will have to open up Diamonds. Which means he cannot make the contract. Why not Club Ace at Trick 2? Because this is one of those clear cases where it is better to confirm the count before cashing your winners.

The full layout:

NS Vulnerable

Dealer South



Contract: 4♠, by South

Lead: ♥A


Take your time before playing to the first trick, Declarers are repeatedly advised. Take your time after winning the first defensive trick, Defenders should be advised.

count along or you will be counted out

YOU ARE EAST HOLDING 3, AKT752, J532, 62. With both sides vulnerable, partner deals and passes. So does your RHO, you try 2♥ but no, that does not stop N-S, who reach 3NT. Partner dutifully leads ♥J and Dummy comes down:

Both Vulnerable

Dealer West

	♠	A T 4	
	♥	6 4	
	♦	Q T 9 7 6	
	♣	J T 8	
		N	
W		E	
		S	
	♠	3	
	♥	A K T 7 5 2	
	♦	J 5 3 2	
	♣	6 2	


You duck the ♥J lead and Declarer wins with the Queen. At Trick 2, Declarer plays SQ covered by your partner with the King and won on the table with the Ace. This is followed by a low Spade from Dummy to Declarer's Jack on which you painlessly pitch a Heart. Declarer now cashes Diamond Ace and King on the second of which Partner discards a Spade. Declarer now plays another Spade to the Ten on the table and you discard . . . what?

Just reflect a moment. Declarer started off with three Hearts, three Diamonds, three — maybe four — Spades, and three — maybe four — Clubs. If he has the Spade Nine also, Partner would not have covered with the King. If Declarer has the Ace and King of Clubs, this contract cannot be defeated because he has nine tricks on top. If he does not have the Club Ace, then again this contract cannot be made as Partner is holding on dearly to his second Heart. The tricky position is when Partner has the King of Clubs and Declarer has the Ace, possibly the Ace and Queen in Clubs.

What is Declarer up to? He is well on his way to trap you. If you play automatically and throw what appears to be an “unnecessary” Club . . .

Declarer has counted you out. He knew from your bidding that you have six Hearts. You have shown up with one Spade and four Diamonds, leaving room for only two Clubs. If you dispense with one of your two Clubs, on the third Spade, he can extract the last Club by playing the Ace and then end playing you in Hearts for Dummy to win the last two tricks with Diamond Queen and Ten. That seems to be his game plan.

The discard you make on the third Spade can frustrate that plan. Hold on to that “unnecessary” second Club and throw that seeming fourth winner in Hearts. For all you know, Declarer may try the losing the Club finesse, in which case he will go two down. If he plays safe, he will still be one short. The full deal:

<i>Both Vulnerable</i>		<i>Dealer West</i>
	♠ AT 4	
	♥ 6 4	
	♦ QT 9 7 6	
	♣ JT 8	
	N	
♠ K 9 7 6 5 2	W  E	♠ 3
♥ J 3		♥ AKT 7 5 2
♦ 4		♦ J 5 3 2
♣ K 9 4 3		♣ 6 2
	S	
	♠ QJ 8	
	♥ Q 9 8	
	♦ AK 8	
	♣ AQ 7 5	

Contract: 3 NT, by South
Lead: ♥J

Exit cards are lifelines. A winner? . . . Well, perhaps a seeming winner.