

HAND OF THE MONTH FOR NEWER PLAYERS

April, 2016

Regular readers of this columns may recall a series of hands last year that highlighted three of the most common situations in which it is advisable to delay drawing trumps, a) when dummy's trumps are needed to ruff losers from hand, b) when the trump suit is a critical source of transportation, and c) when it is essential to first get rid of a side suit loser.

My thanks to Carlos Munoz, Treasurer of District 3 and a fine player, for this hand from a club game. By delaying the drawing of trumps, Carlos squeezed out an extra trick to achieve an excellent match point result.

	NORTH	
	S A965	
WEST	H J974	EAST
S J10873	D K43	S Q2
H 862	C J8	H Q10
D 1065		D 10972
C 42	SOUTH	C KQ1065
	S K4	
Vulnerable: none	H AK53	
Dealer: South	D AQJ	
Opening lead: Heart 2	C A973	

Bidding:

South	West	North	East
2 notrump (20-21 HCP)	pass	3 clubs (Stayman)	pass
3 hearts (at least 4 hearts)	pass	4 hearts	all pass

In the actual club game, Carlos and his partner used the Precision Club system, which got them to the same four heart contract by South that would be reached using the Standard American auction shown above.

The opening trump lead made it likely the queen was with East. When the opening lead went 2-4-10-Ace, an easy route to eleven tricks would be to cross to the ace of spades and lead the jack of hearts, planning to let it ride if not covered. When the queen appears, the last trump can be drawn with the nine, and eleven tricks are made via three top trumps, three diamonds, two spades, one club, and one ruff each in spades and clubs.

Knowing the importance of extra tricks in matchpoint scoring, however, Carlos recognized that if he could arrange to ruff two spades in his hand, he would make one extra trick. To this end, at trick two he crossed to the diamond king and led the jack of trumps to the queen and ace. Leaving the last trump outstanding, he now played king and ace of spades, ruffed a spade in his hand and led a low club.

Had West held a club honor, he could have spoiled things by winning the trick and leading his last trump. However, when East won perforce and continued another club, Carlos won the ace, ruffed a club in dummy, *and ruffed a second spade in his hand*, leaving the good nine of trumps in dummy to take the last trick. *Four hearts bid, making six.*

Carlos's plan required some good fortune, i.e. West did not have a club honor, and he did have four spades requiring him to follow suit to the last spade. Note however, that the plan elected by Carlos never jeopardized the sure eleven tricks he would have made via a more straightforward line of play.

Well done Carlos!!!!!!!!!!!!

MORAL: In a matchpoint event, it may be well worth the extra effort to play for a favorable lie of the cards in search of an overtrick, or two, or more.