

Bridge Hand of the Week

Spot watching - *Nov 22 2010*

When you are blessed with useful spots, it will pay you to make note of your luck and play accordingly.

Dlr: West	♠ 6
Vul: None	♥ 9 6 4
	♦ Q J 10 7 6
	♣ Q 10 7 6
	♠ A K 5
	♥ A K 8 2
	♦ 9 5
	♣ A K J 9

West	North	East	South
2♠	Pass	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

After West starts with a weak two-bid in spades, you can hardly do less than your 3NT bid, relying on partner to have a couple of useful cards. Indeed, the ♣Q and ♣10 are keys to your success.

West, of course, leads the ♠Q. You have eight top tricks. How do you plan to find a ninth?

Solution

There is little point in playing on diamonds. Spades surely are divided 6-3, and West is likely to have one of the missing diamond honors. Should you hope for a 3-3 division of hearts?

If you consider the spots you have been dealt, you will do as declarer did, winning the ♠A at trick one and playing a low heart from hand. You can see how that worked out by examining the full deal:

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	♠ 6	
	♥ 9 6 4	
	♦ Q J 10 7 6	
	♣ Q 10 7 6	
♠ Q J 10 8 4 2		♠ 9 7 3
♥ J 3		♥ Q 10 7 5
♦ A 2		♦ K 8 4 3

♣ 5 4 2

♣ 8 3

♠ A K 5
♥ A K 8 2
♦ 9 5
♣ A K J 9

West rose with the ♥J and continued with the ♠J. Declarer discarded a diamond from the table and took the trick with the ♠K. Before declarer committed himself in hearts, he played the ♣A, ♣K and ♣J.

After West followed three times in clubs, the chances that hearts were 3-3 dropped from about one in three to one in four. The chance that West began with one or two hearts was nearly three times more likely than a 3-3 break. If West began with two honors doubleton in hearts, playing the ♥K and then finessing East for the remaining honor would succeed. Again, this is much worse than playing West for only one heart honor and one or two hearts.

Accordingly, declarer overtook the ♣J with the queen and led the ♥9, intending to let it run if East played low. East could have split his honors with Q-10-4 left, but it would not have helped. Declarer would win, return to dummy with the ♣10 and finesse against East's remaining honor.

Once West was marked with nine cards in the black suits, playing hearts in this manner offered a chance of success better than 55%.

Of course, without such good spots in hearts, declarer would have had to rely on a 3-3 split in the suit.

	♠ 6	
	♥ 9 6 4	
	♦ Q J 10 7 6	
	♣ Q 10 7 6	
♠ Q J 10 8 4 2		♠ 9 7 3
♥ J 3		♥ Q 10 7 5
♦ A 2		♦ K 8 4 3
♣ 5 4 2		♣ 8 3
	♠ A K 5	
	♥ A K 8 2	
	♦ 9 5	
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