

Maritha's Teaching Points

Protecting Partner

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Hands are from Eastlake Bridge Club game on BBO, September 29,

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Hand #9

North

♠954

♥AKQ5

♦8654

♣J10

West

(Raymond S)

♠62

♥J2

♦AJ973

♣A754

East

(MarithaP)

♠K10

♥987643

♦—

♣KQ932

South

♠AQJ873

♥10

♦KQ102

♣86

E-W Vulnerable; Dealer North

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
	P	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

This was an unfortunate hand for N/S. After two passes, South opens 1♠. North bids 3♠ (no Drury) to show a limit raise. It is hard to fault the bid with three quick tricks in hearts and 8 losers by LTC. South, with a 5 loser hand, happily carries on to game.

Leading Aces without the Kings is rarely right, and a spade could (and would!) finesse me, so Ray properly led the ♥J from his doubleton. [The West player who led a spade allowed South to make game. The free finesse in spades and 2-2 trump break allowed South to lose only 3 diamonds. (Both club losers go away on the hearts.)]

South grabbed a top heart at our table, and played another top heart, discarding a club loser. Ray's ♥2 on the second round should give Declarer pause. **Although 6-2 hearts are not likely, Ray's carding indicates an original doubleton heart.** South, however, decided to take a chance and played another top heart, discarding the last club loser, and Ray ruffed.

Ray cashed the ♣A and Declarer ruffed. Declarer played a top spade and a spade to my ♠K as Ray played an (encouraging) ♦7 (standard attitude).

So, South's original pattern is now clear: 6-1-4-2. There is still a trump on Dummy for an entry. **It is vital that I preserve Ray's only safe exit card—a club—so that he will NOT be end played when he wins a diamond trick.** So, I returned a heart—forcing Declarer to ruff. A club would have left Ray with no safe exit.

South played the ♦K. Ray took the ♦A as I showed out. Ducking the King would have been better—waiting for the second high diamond from Declarer. Ray safely exited with a club—forcing Declarer to ruff. Declarer fell from grace, playing the ♦Q and then giving two diamond tricks to Ray's ♦J and ♦9.

Declarer can save a trick by simply playing a LOW diamond rather than the Queen on the second round of diamonds. Ray will be end played—the scenario I was trying to avoid. If Ray leads a diamond, South will win both the ♦10 and the ♦Q. If Ray leads a club, Declarer can ruff on Dummy, discarding South's only remaining diamond loser (still holding the ♦Q). Down one would have been better than down 2.

If Ray ducks the ♦K (waiting for the Queen from South), he can escape the end play. He kills the ♦Q and exits with a club. Declarer is forced to play from ♦10x into Ray's ♦J9. Or, if Declarer tries a LOW diamond on the second round (hoping for a miraculous originally doubleton Ace that ducked), Ray can win the ♦9, and exit with a club. He will be guaranteed two more diamonds tricks with the ♦A and ♦J.

A cute little hand—and **a good reminder to defenders to preserve partner's exit cards as well as your own in order to avoid such end plays.**

If South abandons the hearts at trick #3, and takes the spade finesse, South will get 6 spades. The ♠9 will serve as an entry to Dummy to dump Declarer's last club loser. Declarer can then play a diamond to the ♦K. Even losing three diamonds, **South can make the game.**

Hand #13

North
(MarithaP)
♠Q42
♥3
♦J9872
♣AJ93

West
♠AJ9863
♥K86
♦KQ

East
♠K10
♥J9742
♦A1063

♣74

♣Q2

South
(Raymond S)

♠75

♥AQ105

♦54

♣K10865

All Vulnerable; Dealer North

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
	P	P	P
1♠	P	1NT	P
2♠	P	3♠	P
P	P		

After three passes, West opened 1 ♠. Bot East bid 1NT, and West rebid his suit. Bot East raised gently to 3 ♠, and everyone passed.

I don't like singleton leads when I have what looks like a natural trump trick, so I led a 4th-best diamond. [If I had a very weak hand, so that Ray might have two quick entries, I would lead my singleton.] Ray gave count with the ♦5 and West won the ♦K. Unfortunately, I cannot tell whether Ray started with singleton ♦5; doubleton ♦54; or the ♦Q54 and knew that playing the ♦Q could not be correct.

Declarer could have played for 4-3 diamonds and unblocked his other top honor and played ♠A and ♠K and tried for a club discard on the ♦A, but he decided against it. He went over to the ♠K and ran the ♠10 for a finesse to my ♠Q. **Ray played the ♠7, then ♠5—trump suit preference for hearts.**

Ray is likely to have the ♥A, so I can probably get a heart ruff. However, if he has the ♣K behind the ♣Q in Dummy, he would be reluctant to ask for a club shift—not knowing where the Ace is. So, I cash the ♣A first. Ray signals encouragement, and I continue with my 4th-best club to give count. Ray cashes the ♥A. Although my 3 looks discouraging, he knows that there is no future in the minor suits, so he returns a low heart. Declarer rises King, and I ruff. I have a safe club exit with trump gone from Dummy. West runs off all his trumps and the other top diamond, but has to give another heart to Ray on the 13th round. ♣