

Maritha's Teaching Points

There Is Logic To Conventional Agreements



By Maritha Pottenger

marithapottenger@gmail.com

Maritha has been a regular columnist for the D22 Forum and now the D22Connection for decades, month after month providing our members with great insights on the many aspects of our great pastime. Her swan song was in July, closing off years of educational articles. Since I couldn't accept her early retirement, I coaxed her into agreeing to having us publish a couple of hands every month, hands that form part of her Teaching Points almost-daily bulletin to many of her students. We hope you will enjoy these as much as her previous columns. – Editor

Hands are from ACBL game on BBO, July 23, 2021

Hand #1

North
♠10843
♥Q53
♦2
♣J8652

West
(MarithaP)
♠96
♥109842
♦QJ84
♣Q4

East
(secsectan)
♠AQJ7
♥J
♦K763
♣K1073

South
♠K52
♥AK76
♦A1095
♣A9

NS Vul; Dealer South

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1♦
P	1♠	P	3NT
P	P	X	4♠
P	P	X	P
P	P		

South opened 1♦ and I passed. North eked out a 1♠ call –understandable with a singleton diamond, but I would still pass and hope the opponents rescue us. (I would bid with the same 3 HCP if I had 5 spades.) Kent passed, and South jumped to 3NT –incorrect. The proper bid is 2NT to show the 18-19 HCP, balanced hand.

Kent doubled 3NT. That calls for the first bid suit of Dummy, so I was preparing to lead the ♠9 when South ran to 4♠. What is going on!?! This does not make sense, so I passed. Kent doubled again, and everyone passed.

Kent led the ♥J –which I was reasonably sure was a singleton. Declarer played the ♥K on Dummy, and I played the ♥2 (standard attitude). Declarer then cashed the ♦A. I played the ♦8 (current count) and Kent played the ♦7. I echoed with the ♦4 on the next diamond. No need to split my honors. Kent must have the ♦K for his double of 3NT. Declarer ruffed, and Kent echoed in diamonds as well. [So, diamonds were 4-1-4-4 around the table. Kent must have 4 spades for his double, so Declarer has only 4 spades. Declarer would have bid 1♥ before 1♠ had s/he held 4 of them, so Declarer is now officially 4-3-1-5.]

Declarer tried the ♥Q and Kent ruffed small and led the ♠Q. Declarer thought and then won the King. North ruffed another diamond. Then led a club to the Ace, and ruffed Dummy’s last diamond.

A low club went to Kent’s 10 and my Queen. I returned the ♠9. Kent overtook with the Jack and cashed the ♠A. He won the ♣K, but had to surrender a club to North on the last trick.

Hand #2

	North	
	♠743	
	♥Q762	
	♦J10	
	♣J753	
West		East
(MarithaP)		(secsectan)
♠KJ985		♠A
♥J43		♥K8
♦Q52		♦A98764
♣Q4		♣AK98
	South	
	♠Q1062	
	♥A1095	

♦K3

♣1062

EW Vul; Dealer South

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
			P
P	P	1♦	P
1♠	P	3♣	P
3♠	P	3NT	P
P	P		

This hand is just included to remind people that lead conventions exist for logical reasons. The standard lead against 3NT, if you are leading a heart from the South, is the ♥10 (top of an interior sequence). If you play Rusinow style, the appropriate lead is the 9 (zero or two higher). People who make the conventional lead can hold 3NT to 9 tricks. [They get three heart tricks and the ♦K]. People who lead a 4th-best ♥5 force North to play the Queen, and E/W take 2 heart tricks and win 11 tricks in 3NT.

Hand #3

North

♠AK753

♥A1095

♦AQ3

♣9

West

(MarithaP)

♠1082

♥K73

♦K65

♣A1087

East

(secsectan)

♠Q64

♥Q642

♦87

♣K432

South

♠J9

♥J8

♦J10942

♣QJ65

All Non-Vul; Dealer West

The Bidding:

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

North opened 1♠ and South bid 1NT. North jumped to 3♥ and South took a “false preference” to 3♠. [I would bid 3NT with the South hand, which also has issues.] North went to 4♠. Kent led a “top of nothing” ♦8. Declarer played the ♦J from Dummy and I ducked (giving count). Do NOT cover an honor with an honor when you have nothing to promote!

Declarer ran the ♠J to Kent’s Queen –incorrect since Declarer does NOT own the 10. I played the ♠2–trump suit preference showing a club card. Kent knows we are only getting one club trick from the auction: Declarer is 5-4 in spades and hearts, and the opening lead makes it clear that Declarer has 3 diamonds. So, he continued with the ♦7 to stick Declarer in hand. I ducked again, and Declarer won in North with the ♦Q.

Declarer then played the ♥A and a slow heart, trying for a ruff on Dummy. Kent ducked, and I played the ♦K for Kent to ruff. He trusted my trump suit preference and played a low club to Dummy’s ♣Q and my ♣A. I returned the ♠10, to smother Dummy’s ♠9. and prevent heart ruffs in the South.

Declarer won the ♠A and ♠K and still had to give up a heart to Kent’s Queen. Down two was an excellent board.

Hand #4

North
 ♠1054
 ♥87
 ♦J107
 ♣KQ743

West
 (MarithaP)
 ♠A876
 ♥Q95
 ♦Q
 ♣J10952

East
 (secsectan)
 ♠QJ92
 ♥102
 ♦A9542
 ♣A6

South
 ♠K3
 ♥AKJ643
 ♦K863
 ♣8

All Vul; Dealer North

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
	P	1♦	1♥
X	P	1♠	2♥
2♠	P	P	3♥
X	P	P	P

This hand was a classic example of the rampant overbidding in bridge –especially online, as people do not get doubled enough. It also illustrates the dangers of applying Losing Trick Count when you do NOT have a fit, and when partner has nothing (so no entries for any finessing, etc.). South had a 5-loser hand, but North had shown zilch, and South had no guarantee that North had a fit.

North passed, and Kent opened 1♦. South bid 1♥, and I made a negative double. Kent bid 1♠, and North bid 2♥. I bid 2♠, and North and Kent passed. South bid 3♥, so I doubled. I am not sure we are setting 3♥, but I know -140 will be a lousy matchpoint score, and I don't expect to make 3♠.

I led my singleton ♦Q and Kent won the ♦A. Kent made a very thoughtful defensive play at that point. He knew that I had at least one heart winner for the double, and probably held the ♠A as well. So, leading the ♠Q was more important than giving me a diamond ruff immediately.

His ♠Q fetched the ♠K from South, and I won the ♠A. I returned the ♠8 (suit preference for diamonds) to Kent's ♠J. THEN Kent led the ♦2 (suit preference for clubs) for me to ruff. I returned the ♣J to ♣K and ♣A. Kent gave me another diamond ruff. [Even if Declarer ducks the club –which he should –Kent will fly Ace to give me another diamond ruff as he has a count on the hand. He knows Declarer is 2-6-4-1.]

Doubled, down 2, was a 99% board.

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