



Wide Variations in Skill Produce Widely Varying Results

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	North	
	♠A63	
	♥Q105	
	♦Q10	
	♣KJ974	
West		East
♠872		♠QJ1095
♥A9432		♥7
♦98		♦AKJ74
♣1086		♣Q2
	South	
	♠K4	
	♥KJ86	
	♦6532	
	♣A53	

North	East	South	West
	1♠	Pass	Pass
2♣	Pass	2NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening Lead: ♠2

This very instructive deal occurred in a duplicate tournament where South usually played in 2NT, though two pairs overbid to game in notrump, and four East/West pairs played in spade contacts (all making just nine tricks). One East player was doubled and scored +730 to record the top score his direction.

Strangely, the numbers of tricks collected by the various Souths in their notrump contracts varied dramatically between six and ten. One declarer in 2NT had a kind of knee-jerk reaction to his diamond weakness and went immediately, and desperately, after clubs. In his haste, he had failed to realize that, even if the suit ran, he would have only seven fast tricks. He ended up going down two.

A second declarer, also in 2NT, did realize that he would have to play hearts eventually, so he took dummy's ♠A and led the ♥Q. As East had signaled flamboyantly with ♠Q at trick one, West won the ♥A and returned partner's suit. South now realized subtle dividend from his early play in that he knew for an absolute certainty that East had the ♣Q. West would have responded to his

partner's opening bid by raising to 2♠ if he had that card in addition to the ♥A, plus the three spades he had already revealed.

So, after running hearts, declarer played clubs from the top and finished with ten tricks and a tie for the top score.

A third South was doubly unfortunate. First, he had misbid to 3NT. Second, he was opposed by good defenders. At least he tackled the hand as the previous South had.

However, at trick one, his East had discouraged with the ♠5 (the spade holding was strong, but he desired a diamond shift should partner get in).

Now, West smoothly ducked the ♥A. Declarer continued with a second heart on which East deposited the ♠9. (Observe that he cannot afford a high diamond.) Incidentally, this is a good example of expert defensive signaling at notrump. One discards the suit he doesn't want led, retaining the potential winners in the suit he does want. The message was unmistakable, West now took his ♥A and fired the ♦9.

Down two.

In addition to the point already mentioned, this hand illustrates several important aspects of effective bridge; They're simple, but bridge is -- at bottom -- a simple game.

You've heard them before, you'll hear them again:

1. Count Tricks,
2. Keep the auction in mind during the play,
3. Picture the situation from the opponents' points of view.
4. As much as possible, as declarer, play suits in which the top cards are missing (hearts in the above example), and avoid those lacking the intermediate cards (here, clubs).