



Sleeping on the Couch

The Continuing Misadventures of Dave Playing Bridge with His Wife, Anne



By **Dave Caprera**
Denver, Colorado

Second Hand High

Annie and I traveled to Warwick, Rhode Island for their Labor Day Regional. Our teammates were one of the best pairs in New England, Kate McCallum and Cenk Tuncok, so expectations were high. Playing in a teams game, we faced a competent declarer and “new friend,” Sheila Gabay from Newton, Massachusetts, the town in which I spent my early childhood.

I was sitting *East*, holding: ♠Hxx ♥K10x ♦Q10x ♣KJ8x. With Sheila sitting *South* the auction proceeded 1NT (15-17 HCP) float. Annie led the ♣10 and dummy was an unimpressive: ♠A109x ♥Jxx ♦xxx, ♣xxx. If you place declarer with ♠Hxx ♥Axxx ♦Axx ♣AQx, the deal looks like this:

♠A109x
♥Jxx
♦xxx
♣xxx

♠Hxx
♥Qxx
♦Kxxx
♣109x

♠Hxx
♥K10x
♦Q10x
♣KJ8x

♠Hxx
♥Axxx
♦Axx
♣AQx

What is the target? One way to think about the goal result is to treat each three HCP as being worth approximately one trick. (There are 40 total HCPs and 13 tricks). This works surprisingly well in NT contracts when everyone is balanced. So this hand is a dogfight for the seventh trick. Of course, at IMP scoring, defenders should usually defend to defeat declarer.

Both *East* and *West* should realize that

this hand is about holding declarer to two tricks in the spade suit and assume that dummy doesn't have an outside entry. If declarer has the ♠K or any two honors, she has three spade tricks. So assume she has either the jack or queen but not both. This proves to be a complicated combination. I am going to start by looking at the “simple case” where the *East-West* spades are distributed 3-3. There are 20 ways that six cards can be distributed 3-3, so there are 40 total cases when *South* has either the jack or the queen:

(1) If *South* has the ♠J:

Scenario 1. *West* has ♠xxx (4 cases). *South* has two tricks.

Scenario 2. *West* has ♠KQx (4 cases). *South* plays to finesse, ducks the first honor, and wins the ace on the third round for three tricks.

Scenario 3. *West* has ♠Qxx (6 cases). This is the textbook position where *West* must play the queen on the first round to hold *South* to two tricks.

Scenario 4. *West* has ♠Kxx (6 cases). This is similar to Scenario 3, where *West* must play the king on the first round.

In all four scenarios it doesn't matter whether *South* starts with a small spade or the jack.

(2) If *South* has the ♠Q:

Scenario 5. *West* has ♠xxx (4 cases). *South* has two tricks.

Scenario 6. *West* has ♠Jxx (6 cases). If *South* starts with a small card and *West* plays the jack on the first round *South* is held to two tricks. But if *South* starts with the queen, she will take three tricks.

Scenario 7. *West* has ♠Kxx (6 cases). If *South* starts with a small card and *West* plays small, *South* inserts the ten and can score three tricks. Conversely, if *South* starts with the queen, *West* covers and holds *South* to two tricks.

Scenario 8. *West* has ♠KJx. Whether *South* starts with a small card or with the

queen, and whether *West* plays small, the jack, or king, *South* entitled to three tricks.

So, what does declarer learn from this simple case (where the *East-West* spades are distributed 3-3)? Her only strategic decision is whether to lead the queen or small from ♠Qxx depending on whether she guesses that *West* has ♠Jxx or ♠Kxx (equivalent positions). However, if *South* judges that some percentage of the time greater than zero *West* will not insert the king, then she should start small and in doing so will always win three tricks in at least fourteen out of forty total cases.

And what do the defenders learn from this simple case? For sure *West* should always play high on the first round from ♠Qxx and ♠Jxx. If *West* has ♠KJx it doesn't matter what they play. If *West* has ♠Kxx and declarer leads the queen, *West* must cover.

Finally, if *West* has ♠Kxx, they need to go in with the king to protect *East's* ♠Qxx. This entitles the defenders to their two tricks in twenty six out of forty cases.

I warned you that this was a complicated problem. The *East-West* spades are divided 3-3 only 36% of the time (each specific 3-3 case occurring 1.8%). The more common division is 4-2, which happens 48% of the time, with 15 cases when *West* has two and 15 cases when *West* has four (each specific case occurring 1.6%). (This isn't quite right in that *West* might have led a spade from four or two in preference to the ♣10. But it is close enough for jazz, government work, engineering, tactical nuclear weapons, and the girls I dated before Annie.)

I pondered this problem for over a week and consulted with some of the best players in the country. The simple case I offered is useful for expositional purposes, but we really need to look at the general case, which is much too difficult for me to analyze here. (To be hon-

est, I may not be able to solve it. I believe it to be a Nash equilibrium game theory problem which I could solve if I could formulate it properly, but it is a probabilistic one proving elusive to define correctly.) The following are some considerations that need to be taken into account:

1. The lower spots. When the suit is 4-3-3-3, ♠A109x is sufficient. But when you consider 4-2 distributions, the eight and even the seven can come into play.

2. I assumed that both declarer and defenders play perfectly. Good luck with that. If *West* isn't up to inserting the queen from ♠Qxx or the king from ♠KJx, and *East* won't duck from Hx or Hxx, declarer's correct line of play changes considerably. Similarly, if declarer will always duck *West's* first round honor or assumes that the opponents will always win a trick with their lower honor, then the defenders' play is similarly altered.

3. How likely is declarer to have five spades and open 1NT?

4. How will *East* react when *West* plays the queen from ♠Qxx, only to find that declarer started with ♠Jxxxx. Yes, it is only overtricks, but . . .

5. I initially disregarded cases where declarer has the king because I thought she would always play the king first to cater for singleton queen or jack and for doubleton ♠QJ. But, if *West* is going to play the queen from ♠Qx, ♠Qxx, or ♠Qxxx (?), then declarer would be well advised to start with a small card when holding ♠KJxx. Similarly, if *West* and *East* are both ducking on the first round with ♠Qxx and ♠Jxx, then declarer can start small and make four tricks in the suit.

6. The most difficult cases to analyze are when *West* holds ♠Kxx, ♠KQx, ♠Qxxx, ♠Kxxx, ♠KJxx, and KQxx. These are the mixed strategy holdings (I think, there may be others) where *West* needs to vary

(See *Couch on page 12*)



EL PASO Unit 159
Sanction 1602032

Valentine/Presidents' Day Sectional
February 12—15, 2016

Decker Bridge Center
2216 East Yandell, El Paso, TX 79903
915-544-6565 elpasobridge.com

Friday, February 12	Saturday, February 13
9:30 AM Stratified Swiss (Single Session)	9:30 AM Compact KO #1 Session 1 Stratified Pairs (Single Session)
2:00 PM Stratified Pairs (Single Session)	2:00 PM Compact KO #1 Session 2 Stratified Pairs (Single Session)
(To be handicapped—Director's discretion)	
Fri PM, Sat & Sun—299er Pairs game will be available if 3 or more tables	
Sunday, February 14	Monday, February 15
9:30 AM Pairs/Teams*	9:30 AM & TBA Swiss Teams
2:00 PM Pairs/Teams*	Lunch Provided
*Pairs without teams will be partnered with another pair to form a team.	ALL DAY EVENT

STRATIFICATION (A) 2000+ (B) 500—2000 (C) 0—500

ALL STRATIFICATION BASED ON AVERAGE MASTERPOINTS

ENTRY	\$11.00 per ACBL member per session
FEES	\$14.00 per non or unpaid ACBL member per session \$100.00 per Swiss Team on Monday (includes lunch)

Director: Robert Craig
Chairperson: Barbara Crews 915-309-0529 bcrews1@yahoo.com
Co-Chair: Nancy Stockton 915-585-9770 ndavis@ipc.com
Partnerships: Sandra Myers 915-581-9701 s.myers10@att.net
Co-Chair: Terry Peevey 915-241-2771 profpv@prodigy.net
Caddies: Gloria Lavis 915-584-1315
Hospitality: Cindy Milazzo 915-565-4809 cindymilazzoo@elp.rr.com
Co-Chair: Rhonda Letz 915-526-8570 rletz@elp.rr.com



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MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME

Friday, February 19	9:00 am Stratified Open Pairs	
	1:30 pm Stratified Open Pairs	
	1:30 pm Newcomers Strat Pairs 0-5 Free	
	6:30 pm Stratified Open Pairs	
Saturday, February 20	10:00 am MARCIA BEDELL Strat Open Pairs*—1 st of 2	
	10:00 am Newcomers Stratified Pairs – 0-5 Free	
	2:30 pm MARCIA BEDELL Strat Open Pairs*—2 nd of 2	
*Pairs may choose to play in only one session with silver points awarded for each session. Pairs playing in both sessions are eligible for overall awards!		
Sunday, February 21	10:00 Stratified Swiss Team 1 st Session	
	TBA Lunch (included in your entry fee)	
	TBA Stratified Swiss Team 2 nd Session	

HOST HOTEL AND PLAYING SITE: London Bridge Resort
928-855-0888 1477 Queens Bay
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STRATS Pair Games Stratified by Pair Average
Team Game Stratified by Team Average (Ave MP's of top four)
Strat A 2000-unlimited Strat B 500-2000 Strat C 0-500
Newcomers Stratified Pairs A 0-20 B 0-15 C 0-5

ENTRY FEES Pairs \$11 per person. Swiss Teams \$120 per team (includes lunch) \$3.00 additional per person, per session for non or unpaid ACBL members

DIC Ken Horwedel Sanction S1602097 ACBL Unit 355 bridgeinnorthernarizona.com
Scent-free event (includes tobacco)

Tournament Chair, Darlene Anderson 928-453-7847 and 651-235-9607 (cell)

Email: dariery@yahoo.com Web: lakehavasuduplicatebridge.com

Partnerships, Vivianne Plouffe 928-680-2981 or 780-812-9228 rvplouffe@mcsnet.ca