

Daily Bridge Club

The LM admission test

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Someone asked me whether I thought the bar for achieving Life Master status — as per the American Contract Bridge League's way of acknowledging success — is set too low. (It takes 500 "masterpoints," some won above the club level.)

Masterpoints are a wonderful marketing gimmick, but it's possible to accumulate points without facing tough competition. My friend's question was moot since masterpoints are not, and haven't for some time, been a meaningful measure of proficiency. If I measured skill, I think I might administer a written examination, testing a player's aptitude for bidding and play.

Cover today's North-South cards. Against six spades, West leads a heart, and you take dummy's ace. Given a 2-1 trump break, you have 12 easy tricks and a chance for 13 by setting up dummy's fifth club. Even if trumps break 3-0, you may survive if you pick up the trumps or make use of the fifth club.

Here's a test question; you have a 50-50 chance of getting it right. Do you (a) take dummy's king of trumps or (b) lead a trump to your ace?

You should lead a trump to your ace. In the actual deal, you succeed even when West discards. The play will continue: ace of clubs, club ruff, king of trumps, club ruff, ace of diamonds, club. If East ruffs in, you

pitch your heart loser and take the rest; if instead East discards, you ruff, lead a diamond to dummy and discard a heart on the good club.

If you take the king of trumps first, you may go down if East shows out and West has only three clubs.

North dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K J 6 4

♥ A J

♦ A K

♣ A J 10 5 4

WEST

♠ None

♥ Q 10 7 4 2

♦ Q 8 6 3

♣ K 8 7 3

EAST

♠ Q 7 3

♥ K 9 6 5

♦ 10 9 2

♣ Q 9 2

SOUTH

♠ A 10 9 8 5 2

♥ 8 3

♦ J 7 5 4

♣ 6

North

1 ♣

2 ♦(!)

4 NT

6 ♠

East

Pass

Pass

Pass

All Pass

South

1 ♠

2 ♠

5 ♦

West

Pass

Pass

Pass

Opening lead — ♥ 4

Daily Bridge Club

In the Garden of Eden

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Another sign beside a church in my town:

“Adam and Eve were the first people who didn’t bother to read the Apple User Agreement.”

In today’s deal from a game in the Garden of Eden, Eve played at four spades. The Serpent, West, led the queen of diamonds, and Eve took the king. She next succumbed to the temptation — as players often do — to draw trumps.

Eve next led a heart to finesse with dummy’s jack. East (of Eden) took the ace, but when he returned a diamond to the ace, Eve was marooned in dummy. She led a club to her king, but then the defense got two clubs and a diamond. Down one.

GRUMBLES

“We’ll be driven out of here if you keep playing like that,” Adam grumbled, “and I don’t mean in a limousine.”

Eve can take one high trump, then lead a heart to the jack. If East ducks, Eve draws trumps and leads a second heart to the ten. East wins, and the defense can take two clubs and lead a second diamond, but Eve wins and pitches her last diamond on the king of hearts.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 6 3 ♥ Q 7 4 3
♦ Q J 10 5 ♣ A 8 3. Your partner

opens one club, the next player bids one spade and you double (negative). Your partner then bids two hearts. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your double promised enough strength to respond, with heart length (but not a suitable hand to bid two hearts) and either diamonds or club support. Partner’s two hearts is not a strength-showing “reverse.” He has merely “raised” the suit your double promised. Pass.

South dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ 8 5
♥ K J 10 2
♦ A 6 4
♣ 10 6 4 2

WEST

♠ 6 3
♥ Q 7 4 3
♦ Q J 10 5
♣ A 8 3

EAST

♠ 10 7 2
♥ A 9 6
♦ 9 7 2
♣ Q J 9 7

SOUTH

♠ A K Q J 9 4
♥ 8 5
♦ K 8 3
♣ K 5

South

1 ♠
3 ♠

West

Pass
Pass

North

1 NT
4 ♠

East

Pass
All Pass

Opening lead — ♦ Q

Daily Bridge Club

Play or defend?

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Here's a play-or-defend problem: Would you rather try to make or beat today's four hearts? (North's cue bid of three diamonds promised a heart fit and invitational strength or more. Why that induced South to bid game is a mystery.)

A trump lead lets the defense prevail: East can win and shift to a diamond effectively. But say West leads the ace and a second club. Then which side would you bet on?

Declarer leads a trump at Trick Three, and East wins and leads a third club, letting West score his ten of trumps. If dummy discards a diamond, West can exit with a diamond. South's queen wins, but he loses a spade.

SPADE EXIT

If instead dummy discards a spade, West can exit with a spade. South loses a diamond.

To make four hearts, dummy must underruff(!) on the third club. If West exits with a diamond (a spade is no better), South takes the queen, draws trumps, leads a spade to the queen and cashes the ace. He then runs his trumps, squeezing West between spades and diamonds.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A Q 5 4 ♥ 9 7 6 3
♦ A 6 2 ♣ 5 4. Only your side is vulnerable. The dealer, at your left,

opens three diamonds. Your partner doubles, and the next player passes. What do you say?

ANSWER: You might beat three diamonds a trick or two, but your chances to score a vulnerable game are too bright to settle for an uncertain penalty. Your partner has a good hand with support for the major suits. Cue-bid four diamonds to let him choose the trump suit.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ A Q 5 4

♥ 9 7 6 3

♦ A 6 2

♣ 5 4

WEST

♠ K 9 8

♥ 10 4

♦ K J 10 7 5 3

♣ A 2

EAST

♠ 10 7 2

♥ A 5

♦ 9 4

♣ 10 9 8 7 6 3

SOUTH

♠ J 6 3

♥ K Q J 8 2

♦ Q 8

♣ K Q J

South

1 ♥

4 ♥(!)

West

2 ♦

All Pass

North

3 ♦

East

Pass

Opening lead — ♣ A

Daily Bridge Club

Nobody is perfect

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

"You and I know that nobody is perfect," a club player said to me. "Men make mistakes. But men who play bridge with their wives hear about them sooner."

He had been East in today's deal, defending against 3NT.

"My wife was West and led a low heart," he told me. "Declarer took my ten with the king and led the queen of spades, and I routinely played low. Declarer then switched gears and let the ten of clubs ride. I took the king and returned a heart, but declarer had two hearts, four clubs, two diamonds and a spade."

MISTAKE

"My wife didn't waste any time: She got on my case even before declarer cashed his ninth trick. She said for me to duck the first spade was a mistake."

When your partner leads a long suit against notrump, it's a principle of defense that you should strive to win a trick and return the lead, setting up partner's suit while he retains an entry (or you have an additional entry). If East correctly grabs his ace of spades to return a heart, South fails.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ K J 10 5 ♥ 8 7 3
♦ 7 4 3 ♣ A J 3. The dealer, at your

left, opens two hearts (weak). Your partner doubles, and the next player bids three hearts. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your partner's double might have obliged you to bid at the three level, hence his hand is worth 16 points or more. He will usually have support for all the unbid suits. Bid four spades. You would bid three spades to compete if your ace of clubs were the queen.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K J 10 5

♥ 8 7 3

♦ 7 4 3

♣ A J 3

WEST

♠ 8 4 2

♥ Q 9 6 5 2

♦ Q J 5

♣ 8 4

EAST

♠ A 9 7 3

♥ J 10 4

♦ 9 8 2

♣ K 6 2

SOUTH

♠ Q 6

♥ A K

♦ A K 10 6

♣ Q 10 9 7 5

South

1 ♣

2 NT

West

Pass

Pass

North

1 ♠

3 NT

East

Pass

All Pass

Opening lead — ♥ 5

Daily Bridge Club

Lack of empathy

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

“My partner is a good player,” a reader’s email states, “but she was absent when they passed out empathy. If I make a mistake, it’s because I’m careless; if she makes one, she’s only human.”

My fan says she held today’s mammoth South hand and rolled into six spades.

“West led the king of clubs,” she says, “and I ruffed and drew trumps. When I took the A-K of hearts next, East discarded. I lost a heart to West and also a diamond. Was I careless, unlucky or only human? I need not tell you what my partner said.”

MISSING TRUMP

Careful play makes the slam. South ruffs the first club high, takes the ace of hearts, leads a trump to dummy and returns a heart. If East ruffs, South plays low and wins the diamond return. She can draw the missing trump and run the hearts to discard dummy’s last diamond.

If East discards on the second heart, South wins, returns a trump to dummy and leads a third heart. If East discards again, South wins, ruffs a heart in dummy and loses only one diamond.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 5 ♥ J 10 5 2
♦ J 8 4 2 ♣ A K 6 2. The dealer, at your left, opens one spade, and two

passes follow. What do you say?

ANSWER: You wouldn’t act in the direct seat — if the player at your right had opened — but actions in the “balancing” seat may be shaded. Since your partner surely has some points (otherwise, the opponents would have bid more), don’t sell out. Double. He must realize that you may have a light hand.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ J 9 8

♥ 9 7 3

♦ Q 9

♣ Q 10 7 4 3

WEST

♠ 5

♥ J 10 5 2

♦ J 8 4 2

♣ A K 6 2

EAST

♠ 7 6 2

♥ 6

♦ K 7 6 5 3

♣ J 9 8 5

SOUTH

♠ A K Q 10 4 3

♥ A K Q 8 4

♦ A 10

♣ None

South

2 ♣

2 ♠

3 ♥

6 ♠

West

Pass

Pass

Pass

All Pass

North

2 ♦

2 NT

3 ♠

East

Pass

Pass

Pass

Opening lead — ♣ K

Daily Bridge Club

Getting a pink slip?

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

"We have a lunchtime game at work on Thursdays," a club player told me, "and yesterday who should sit in but the Big Boss. I was his partner and was declarer at four spades."

My friend displayed the deal.

"West led the king of diamonds and shifted to a trump. I won in dummy and led a heart, ducking East's jack. I won his trump return and led another heart, but West won and led a third trump. I lost a third heart for down one.

"I apologized to my boss, and all he said was, 'To err is human; to forgive is not company policy.' What did he mean?"

TRUMP SHIFT

I hope my friend didn't get a pink slip in his pay envelope. After South wins Trick Two, he can draw trumps and take the K-Q-J of clubs. He then leads dummy's queen of diamonds and throws a heart.

West wins and must concede South's 10th trick. If West takes the ace of hearts, South's king wins; if instead West leads the jack of diamonds, South ruffs and reaches dummy with the ace of clubs for the good ten of diamonds.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 7 3 2 ♥ A Q 6
♦ A K J 8 ♣ 8 5 4. You open one diamond, your partner responds one

spade, you bid 1NT and he tries two hearts. What do you say?

ANSWER: With four cards in each major, partner would respond one heart, showing the suits "up the line." He will often have five spades and four hearts, maybe five of each major. Bid two spades. Your hearts are stronger, but you must return to what is likely your longer combined holding.

West dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ Q 10 9

♥ 7 2

♦ Q 10 9 4

♣ A J 3 2

WEST

♠ 7 3 2

♥ A Q 6

♦ A K J 8

♣ 8 5 4

EAST

♠ 6 4

♥ J 10 9 8 3

♦ 6 5 3 2

♣ 10 7

SOUTH

♠ A K J 8 5

♥ K 5 4

♦ 7

♣ K Q 9 6

West

1 ♦

Pass

Pass

North

Pass

1 NT

4 ♠

East

Pass

Pass

All Pass

South

Dbl

3 ♠

Opening lead — ♦ K

Daily Bridge Club

Simple Saturday

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

“Simple Saturday” columns focus on basic technique and logical thinking.

Old burglars never die; they just steal away. Dummy play has a psychological element as well as a technical element. A good declarer knows ways he may steal a trick with deceptive play.

Against today’s 3NT, West leads the deuce of spades. South wins with the queen, but the defenders threaten to set up three spade tricks to go with their two red-suit aces. If South leads a diamond next, West may rise with his ace to continue spades. South will have only eight tricks, and the defense can cash spades when West takes the ace of hearts.

BEST CHANCE

Declarer’s best chance is a touch of larceny. At Trick Two he leads the ten of hearts, faking a finesse. If West plays low, South switches to diamonds to set up nine tricks in time.

Should West be fooled? I think not. West has 13 high-card points. South opened 1NT and accepted North’s invitation to game. East is most unlikely to have the queen of hearts.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A Q ♥ Q 10 7 3
♦ Q 10 4 2 ♣ A K 4. The dealer, at your right, opens one heart.

What do you say?

ANSWER: The textbook call is 1NT, showing the same type of hand as a 1NT opening bid but with a stopper in opener’s suit. Many players would choose that call. Some would avoid overcalling 1NT with only 15 or 16 points (to reduce the chance of a heavy penalty). If the opponents are vulnerable, I would accept a pass, hoping to penalize them.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ 6 3

♥ K J 5

♦ K J 7 6 3

♣ 9 6 5

WEST

♠ K 8 5 2

♥ A 8 4

♦ A 8

♣ Q 8 7 3

EAST

♠ J 10 9 7 4

♥ 9 6 2

♦ 9 5

♣ J 10 2

SOUTH

♠ A Q

♥ Q 10 7 3

♦ Q 10 4 2

♣ A K 4

South

1 NT

3 NT

West

Pass

All Pass

North

2 NT

East

Pass

Opening lead — ♠ 2

Daily Bridge Club

Mad bridge party

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

“Never doubt, child, that I’m the most powerful card in Wonderland,” the Queen of Hearts told Alice haughtily as the players at the Mad Hatter’s game took a tea break. “No ace or king would dare capture me.”

“Of course, your majesty,” sighed Alice, who had grown weary of the Queen’s bluster. “I’d like a chance to teach her some humility,” she muttered to herself.

When play resumed, Alice was today’s East. South, the March Hare, settled for an invitational jump to 2NT at his second turn since North was the Hatter, who usually bid like the madman he was. Sure enough, he raised to 3NT despite his 13-point minimum. West, the Dormouse, led the five of diamonds.

“All invitations accepted,” the Hatter chirped as he tabled dummy.

The March Hare ducked Alice’s queen of diamonds and won the diamond return. To make his game, declarer needed heart tricks. At Trick Three, he led a heart to dummy’s king ... and Alice promptly dumped her queen.

“Off with her head!” the Queen of Hearts roared. “How dare she let my card be a loser.”

The Hare returned a second heart to his ace, but the Dormouse won the third heart with the jack and cashed three diamonds for down one.

“Oh, be quiet for once,” Alice

told the fuming Queen of Hearts. “My play was necessary to beat the contract. And besides, you’re nothing but a pack of cards.”

Unless East gets rid of her queen of hearts, declarer can arrange to lose a heart trick to East, setting up four hearts plus two spades, two clubs and a diamond.

North dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K 7 5 2

♥ K 4

♦ 9 6 3

♣ A K 8 4

WEST

♠ J 10 6

♥ J 9 8

♦ K J 8 5 2

♣ 10 6

EAST

♠ Q 9 3

♥ Q 10 3

♦ Q 7

♣ Q J 9 7 2

SOUTH

♠ A 8 4

♥ A 7 6 5 2

♦ A 10 4

♣ 5 3

North

1 ♣

1 ♠

3 NT(!)

East

Pass

Pass

All Pass

South

1 ♥

2 NT

West

Pass

Pass

Opening lead — ♦ 5

Daily Bridge Club

Thunderous applause

By FRANK STEWART
Tribune Content Agency

It was a stormy day. Lightning crackled in the skies above my club. Thunder was imminent — inside as well as outside since Cy the Cynic had cut his adversary Wendy, our feminist, in a penny game.

Cy and Wendy were East-West, and she led the jack of hearts against 3NT. South won with the queen and led a diamond: deuce, nine, queen. Cy returned a heart to the ace.

Wendy won the next diamond and led a club. Dummy played low. The Cynic won with the jack and led a third heart — whereupon South claimed nine tricks and a lightning bolt crashed nearby.

“The gods are angry,” Wendy snarled, “and so am I.”

SECOND CLUB

Cy can place Wendy with the ace of diamonds; if South had it, he would cash it before finessing. So Cy prevails by leading the deuce of clubs at Trick Three. When Wendy gets in, a second club gives East-West five tricks.

“I read that men are far more likely to be struck by lightning than women,” Cy muttered.

“Women know to come in out of the rain,” Wendy growled.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ Q 10 7 ♥ A 4
♦ K 10 9 7 4 ♣ K 6 4. You open one

diamond, your partner responds one heart, you bid 1NT and he tries two spades. The opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your partner has “reversed” as responder, a sequence that is forcing to game. Though you had a borderline opening bid, you must not pass. (Even if it turned out right to pass, you would damage partnership confidence.) Bid 2NT or three diamonds.

North dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ Q 10 7
♥ A 4
♦ K 10 9 7 4
♣ K 6 4

WEST
♠ 6 5 2
♥ J 10 9 8 6
♦ A 8 2
♣ 5 3

EAST
♠ 9 8 4 3
♥ 7 3 2
♦ Q 3
♣ A Q J 2

SOUTH
♠ A K J
♥ K Q 5
♦ J 6 5
♣ 10 9 8 7

North	East	South	West
1 ♦	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♥ J

Daily Bridge Club

Alarming play

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Maybe an alarm clock is a device most useful to people who don't have small children. But many bridge players could use one as declarer — set to go off right after the opening lead.

In today's deal, North could have had no less for his double, or South for his invitational jump to two spades. West led the king of hearts, and declarer took dummy's ace and led a diamond: eight, jack, queen.

THIRD TRUMP

East had signaled with the jack on the first heart, so West next led the six. East won with the nine and led a trump, and West took the queen and ace and led a third trump. Then South couldn't ruff any diamonds in dummy, and he lost two more diamonds for down one.

South's play was alarming; he needed to be jolted awake at Trick One. He must let West's king of hearts win. Then South can handle the diamonds so that East never gets in for a fatal trump shift. Nor can West gain by leading trumps since he will lose a trump trick. In any case, South wins at least eight tricks.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ K 9 7 6 4 ♥ 7 5
♦ A J 4 2 ♣ 8 3. The dealer, at your left, opens three hearts. Your partner

doubles, and the next player passes. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your partner's hand is worth at least 17 points; he suggests support for the unbid suits, especially spades. (He may have a stronger hand with a suit he intends to bid.) Jump to four spades. To bid three spades when you have a five-card suit and a decent hand would be more than wimpy.

West dealer

Neither side vulnerable

NORTH

♠ J 10 8
♥ A 8 3 2
♦ 6 3
♣ A K 9 5

WEST

♠ A Q 3
♥ K Q 6
♦ Q 10 7 5
♣ J 6 2

EAST

♠ 5 2
♥ J 10 9 4
♦ K 9 8
♣ Q 10 7 4

SOUTH

♠ K 9 7 6 4
♥ 7 5
♦ A J 4 2
♣ 8 3

West	North	East	South
1 ♦	Dbl	Pass	2 ♠
All Pass			

Opening lead — ♥ K

Daily Bridge Club

Heavy traffic

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Cy the Cynic says that the highways are crowded, but the extra mile doesn't have much traffic. Cy isn't one to talk: He never goes an extra mile as declarer, preferring to rely on the first line of play he sees.

At today's four hearts, Cy played low from dummy on the first diamond, and East took the queen and led a spade. Cy won, drew trumps and let the jack of diamonds ride. He was annoyed when East produced the king and led a club. West took the king and cashed the king of spades for down one.

LOW CLUB

Cy stopped at Mile Marker 1. After he takes the ace of spades, he gets an extra mile — an extra chance — by leading a low club.

West takes the king, cashes a spade and leads a second diamond, but Cy can take dummy's ace, unblock the queen of clubs, draw trumps and pitch a diamond from dummy on the ace of clubs. He can ruff his jack of diamonds in dummy to land the contract.

If East had the K-J of clubs, Cy could still hope to find West with the king of diamonds.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 8 7 3 2 ♥ A J 8 4
♦ A 8 4 ♣ Q 10. Your partner opens

one club, you respond one heart and he bids one spade. The opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your 11 points are enough to invite game, hence raise to three spades. If your eight of spades were the king, you could bid four spades. It's tempting to commit to game with your actual hand since you have three useful cards, but your weak trumps should indicate caution.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ 8 7 3 2

♥ A J 8 4

♦ A 8 4

♣ Q 10

WEST

♠ K 9 4

♥ 5

♦ 9 7 3 2

♣ K J 9 4 3

EAST

♠ Q 10 6 5

♥ 7 6 3

♦ K Q 5

♣ 8 7 2

SOUTH

♠ A J

♥ K Q 10 9 2

♦ J 10 6

♣ A 6 5

South

1 ♥

4 ♥

West

Pass

All Pass

North

3 ♥

East

Pass

Opening lead — ♦ 7

Daily Bridge Club

He who weights

By **FRANK STEWART**

Tribune Content Agency

Cy the Cynic is always dieting but insists he's not overweight. Cy says that, according to the charts, he is three inches too short.

Cy came up short of tricks at today's slam. He ruffed West's king of spades and took the A-J of trumps. When East discarded, the Cynic tried to unblock his high diamonds, but West ruffed the third diamond and led another spade.

The Cynic ruffed, led a trump to dummy and threw two clubs on the J-10 of diamonds, but then he had to try a club finesse with his queen. Down one.

BLOCKING

Cy has a "wait" problem: He won't take time to plan his play. At Trick One, Cy can discard a blocking high diamond. He ruffs the next spade and takes the A-J of trumps and two diamonds. Cy can then lead a trump to dummy and discard three clubs on the J-10-9 of diamonds.

Cy might also ruff the first spade. He could take the A-9 of trumps, ruff the last spade and lead high diamonds. If West ruffed the third diamond, he would be end-played.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A K Q 7 6 ♥ 7 5 4
♦ 7 5 ♣ K J 6. You open one spade, and your partner bids 1NT. The

opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: In "Standard" methods, a rebid of two spades would suggest a six-card or longer suit. Pass, though to bid two spades anyway might work when you hold a strong five-carder and weakness in both red suits. In the "two-over-one-game-forcing" style, partner's 1NT response is forcing, and your correct systemic bid is two clubs.

West dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ 10 4
♥ Q 9 8
♦ J 10 9 4 2
♣ 7 5 3

WEST

♠ A K Q 7 6
♥ 7 5 4
♦ 7 5
♣ K J 6

EAST

♠ J 9 8 5 3 2
♥ 6
♦ 8 6 3
♣ 10 9 8

SOUTH

♠ None
♥ A K J 10 3 2
♦ A K Q
♣ A Q 4 2

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	6 ♥
All Pass			

Opening lead — ♠ K

Daily Bridge Club

Building blocks

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

"Is it true that seven out of five people have trouble with fractions?" — graffiti.

I don't know about that, but handling single suit combinations is a building block of good dummy play, and many people have trouble with it.

At today's 3NT, South took the king of clubs, led a diamond to his hand and returned a low heart to dummy's king, winning. Then came the play to Trick Four: three of hearts, seven, jack, ace. West next led the jack of clubs, and declarer won, came to his king of spades and led a third heart. He hoped for a 3-3 split, but East took the nine and led another spade. South won only seven tricks.

NEXT HEART

Declarer mismanaged the hearts. After the king wins, he must play low from his hand on the next heart.

If the suit breaks 3-3, South's play is moot, but the correct play gains if West held A-x. South can win a spade shift and lead the jack of hearts to force out East's queen, setting up three heart tricks, two spades, two diamonds and two clubs.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A K ♥ J 10 5 4 2
♦ A K 4 3 ♣ 6 2. Your partner opens one spade, you bid two hearts, he rebids two spades and you try three

diamonds. Partner next bids three hearts. What do you say?

ANSWER: Partner lacks good heart support. Your bid of two hearts suggested a five-card or longer suit, and he often would have raised directly with three-card support. Bid three spades to show a tolerance for that suit. He may have six cards in spades.

South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ 9 4 2
♥ K 3
♦ J 9 5
♣ A K 8 7 4

WEST

♠ Q 8 7 5
♥ A 8
♦ 6 2
♣ Q J 10 9 3

EAST

♠ J 10 6 3
♥ Q 9 7 6
♦ Q 10 8 7
♣ 5

SOUTH

♠ A K
♥ J 10 5 4 2
♦ A K 4 3
♣ 6 2

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♥	Pass
3 NT	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♣ Q

Daily Bridge Club

Simple Saturday

By **FRANK STEWART**

Tribune Content Agency

My “Simple Saturday” columns focus on improving basic technique and developing logical thinking.

Cy the Cynic, a member of my club and a confirmed bachelor, asserts that the secret to having a good marriage remains a secret. Here’s a secret for the defenders’ play: Keep “parity” — the same length — with a long suit held by declarer or dummy.

At today’s 3NT, dummy’s king wins the first spade, and declarer starts the clubs. East correctly grabs his ace immediately to return a spade: jack, queen. South’s ace wins the third spade, and South then cashes three clubs. West must discard twice. What should he throw?

LAST SPADE

West must keep his last spade, and he must save all four hearts, keeping “parity” with the four-card length in dummy. So West must discard the five and king of diamonds. If declarer leads a diamond next, West wins, and East gets two more spade tricks for down one.

If West ever discards a heart, dummy wins four heart tricks, and South makes his game.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 10 7 6 5 4 ♥ J 10 3 ♦ 6 2 ♣ A 8 5. The dealer, at your left, opens one club. Your partner

doubles, you respond (“advance”) one spade and he raises to three spades. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your partner has, or should have, a mammoth hand. Your one spade promised neither any points nor decent spades, yet he was willing to undertake a nine-trick contract. Since you have a five-card suit and an ace, bid four spades. You should make it easily.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K
♥ A Q 5 2
♦ 9 8 7 4
♣ J 10 7 4

WEST

♠ Q 8 3 2
♥ 8 7 6 4
♦ A K 5
♣ 6 3

EAST

♠ 10 7 6 5 4
♥ J 10 3
♦ 6 2
♣ A 8 5

SOUTH

♠ A J 9
♥ K 9
♦ Q J 10 3
♣ K Q 9 2

South

1 NT

2 ♦

West

Pass

Pass

North

2 ♣

3 NT

East

Pass

All Pass

Opening lead — ♠ 2

Daily Bridge Club

His turn to bid

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

“He bids too much. But you can’t change a man whose views are set in stone.”

Wendy, my club’s resident feminist, was disgusted at the result in today’s deal — and at Cy the Cynic. Wendy had been East in a penny game; Cy had been West.

Cy believes in cramming as many bids into the auction as possible. Many players embrace that approach. They bid when it’s their turn, with no regard for the possible consequences.

Cy opened one spade, and after two passes South balanced with a double. Cy then inserted two diamonds, and after Wendy took a two-spade preference, South jumped to four hearts, passed out.

Cy led the king of spades, and South ducked, won the next spade and led a trump to his ace. He next took the ace of clubs and led a second club. When the Cynic followed low, South put up dummy’s king and returned a trump ... to his ten. He drew trumps and had 10 tricks.

Declarer did well. If West had ruffed the second club, he would only have ruffed South’s certain club loser. But by playing clubs, South was able to discover West’s distribution and place him with a singleton trump.

“If Cy had just kept his lip zipped at his second turn,” Wendy grumbled, “declarer wouldn’t have known about Cy’s distribution. Declarer would

start the trumps with the A-K. He would lose a trick in each suit.”

Actually, Wendy was mistaken: South could still succeed. Still, I am convinced that too many players climb into the auction with no clear prospects of gain. Then their intervention helps only the opponents.

West dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ A 4 3

♥ 6 3

♦ 8 5 3 2

♣ K J 6 4

WEST

♠ K Q J 10 7

♥ 4

♦ K Q J 10 9

♣ 3 2

EAST

♠ 9 5 2

♥ J 7 5 2

♦ 7 4

♣ Q 10 9 8

SOUTH

♠ 8 6

♥ A K Q 10 9 8

♦ A 6

♣ A 7 5

West	North	East	South
1 ♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠	4 ♥
All Pass			

Opening lead — ♠ K

Daily Bridge Club

Louie's stock purchase

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Unlucky Louie has been beating his head against Wall Street for years.

"Bought any stock lately?" I asked him in the club lounge.

"I invested in a company that makes baby products: bibs and diapers," Louie replied.

"So how is your diaper stock doing?"

"It's unchanged," Louie said solemnly.

Louie's luck hasn't changed and probably won't. When he played at today's slam, he took the ace of diamonds, drew trumps, and took two more diamonds and the A-K of hearts to pitch his low clubs. He next led a club from dummy — and went down when West had the A-Q.

HEART FINESSE

"If I had tried a heart finesse with the jack," Louie sighed, "it wouldn't have worked either."

Louie succeeds with basic technique. At Trick Two he takes the A-K of hearts to pitch a club, then ruffs a heart high. When East-West follow, Louie takes the A-J of trumps and ruffs a second heart. He draws trumps and takes two diamonds and the good fifth heart for 12 tricks.

This week: setting up a suit.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ J 3 ♥ A K J 6 3
♦ K J 10 ♣ 8 7 2. You open one heart, your partner responds one

spade, you bid 1NT and he jumps to three hearts. What do you say?

ANSWER: If partner had A Q 7 6 2, Q 7 2, 7 6, 9 6 5, he would have raised your one heart to two hearts. With A Q 7 6 2, Q 7 2, 7 6, K 6 5, he could have bid two hearts over 1NT; you would know he was inviting game because he didn't raise to two hearts directly. His actual sequence is forcing. Bid four hearts.

North dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ J 3
♥ A K J 6 3
♦ K J 10
♣ 8 7 2

WEST

♠ 7 5 2
♥ 8 5 2
♦ 7 5 3 2
♣ A Q 10

EAST

♠ 8 6
♥ Q 10 9 7
♦ 9 8 6 4
♣ 9 6 4

SOUTH

♠ A K Q 10 9 4
♥ 4
♦ A Q
♣ K J 5 3

North

1 ♥
3 ♥
5 ♦

East

Pass
Pass
Pass

South

2 ♠
4 NT
6 ♠

West

Pass
Pass
All Pass

Opening lead — ♦ 2

Daily Bridge Club

Harlow the Halo

By FRANK STEWART
Tribune Content Agency

“The man could roll sevens if he had only one die,” Unlucky Louie grumbled.

Louie meant the player we call Harlow the Halo. While Harlow basks in Dame Fortune’s smile — his finesses always win and his errors never cost — Louie struggles in her shadow.

In a team match, Louie and Harlow both played at today’s four spades, and West led a club. Harlow played dummy’s queen, accepting the winning finesse as his due. He claimed 10 tricks.

BETTER PLAY

Louie played with more care. He saw that if the club finesse lost, East would prevail with a heart shift. So Louie took the ace and led a low diamond from dummy. East won and led a club to West’s king, but Louie won the heart shift, led a diamond to the ace and ruffed a diamond.

Louie next took the A-Q of trumps and led a good diamond from dummy. East ruffed, but Louie overruffed, led a trump to dummy and took the good diamond. Making four.

If diamonds had split 4-2, Louie would have made game if trumps had split 3-1 or 2-2.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ Q J 2 ♥ 8 7 3
♦ A 8 6 5 3 ♣ A Q. Your partner

opens one club, you respond one diamond and he bids one spade. What do you say?

ANSWER: You have enough strength to commit to game, but unless you are willing to raise to four spades with three-card support or risk 3NT with no heart stopper, you cannot place the contract. Bid two hearts, a forcing “fourth-suit” action that doesn’t promise hearts but merely asks partner to bid again.

North dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ Q J 2
♥ 8 7 3
♦ A 8 6 5 3
♣ A Q

WEST	EAST
♠ None	♠ 8 7 6 5
♥ J 9 4 2	♥ K Q 10
♦ Q 7 2	♦ K J 10
♣ K J 9 6 3 2	♣ 10 7 5

SOUTH
♠ A K 10 9 4 3
♥ A 6 5
♦ 9 4
♣ 8 4

North	East	South	West
1 ♦	Pass	1 ♠	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	All Pass

Opening lead — ♣ 6

Daily Bridge Club

Impassive listener

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

“My partner is a patient listener,” a club player said to me. “He always lets me explain my losing plays. I think it’s because he knows his turn will come.”

My friend was declarer at today’s six spades. He won the diamond opening lead, took the A-Q of trumps and next cashed the A-K of hearts and ruffed a heart high.

“When West showed out,” South told me, “I led a trump to dummy’s king and finessed with the queen of clubs. West won, and I lost another club at the end.”

OVERTRICK

“I explained to my partner that if hearts had split 3-3, I would have made an overtrick. And he might have held a high trump spot I could have used as a dummy entry. He listened impassively — and said I’d booted the slam.”

South indeed needed an extra dummy entry; to get it, he ducks a heart at Trick Three. If East wins and leads a club, South takes the ace, leads a heart to the ace and ruffs a heart high. He draws trumps ending in dummy and takes the king and the good fifth heart for 12 tricks.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ K 4 2 ♥ A K 7 4 2
♦ 5 4 ♣ 4 3 2. Your partner opens one diamond, you respond one heart

and he bids one spade. The opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: To pass would be timid — partner might have enough extra strength to make a game — but no good call is available. A rebid of two hearts would suggest a longer suit, and a bid of 1NT with no sign of a club trick is clearly flawed. Try a raise to two spades as the least evil.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K 4 2

♥ A K 7 4 2

♦ 5 4

♣ 4 3 2

WEST

♠ 8 7 3

♥ 10 8

♦ Q J 10 9 7

♣ K J 5

EAST

♠ 6

♥ Q J 9 6

♦ 8 6 3 2

♣ 10 9 8 7

SOUTH

♠ A Q J 10 9 5

♥ 5 3

♦ A K

♣ A Q 6

South

1 ♠

3 ♠

6 ♠

West

Pass

Pass

All Pass

North

2 ♥

4 ♠

East

Pass

Pass

Opening lead — ♦ Q

Daily Bridge Club

More than one way

By **FRANK STEWART**

Tribune Content Agency

I continue a series on suit establishment. I believe that many players focus on bidding, especially on conventions, and spend too little time on card-play technique.

In today's deal, dummy played low on the opening club lead, and East took the ace and shifted to a trump. South won in dummy, took the ace of diamonds, ruffed a diamond, led a trump to his hand and ruffed his last diamond. But then he was stuck in dummy, and when he led the king of clubs, East ruffed. South also lost two spades and went down.

How would you play four hearts?

SPADE LOSER

With apologies to mule lovers, there is more than one way to skin a mule — and more than one way to set up a suit. Here, South can rely on a loser-on-loser play. He draws trumps and leads the jack of clubs: queen, king. When East discards, South leads the nine of clubs and pitches a spade.

Then South can pitch another spade on the high eight of clubs. He ruffs one diamond in dummy, losing a diamond at the end plus two clubs.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 9 3 2 ♥ K 10 9 6 4
♦ A 7 5 ♣ J 4. The dealer, at your left, opens one diamond. Your partner doubles, you respond (“advance”)

one heart and he then bids one spade. The opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: Since your partner doubled for takeout before bidding his suit, he has substantial extra strength: at least 17 points. If your hand had been any stronger, you could have jumped to two hearts to invite game. Bid four spades.

West dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ A 10 6

♥ A Q J 5

♦ Q

♣ K 9 8 5 2

WEST

♠ K J 7

♥ 2

♦ K 10 6 2

♣ Q 10 7 6 3

EAST

♠ Q 8 5 4

♥ 8 7 3

♦ J 9 8 4 3

♣ A

SOUTH

♠ 9 3 2

♥ K 10 9 6 4

♦ A 7 5

♣ J 4

West

Pass

Pass

All Pass

North

1 ♣

3 ♥

East

Pass

Pass

South

1 ♥

4 ♥

Opening lead — ♣ 6

Daily Bridge Club

Test your dummy play

By **FRANK STEWART**
Tribune Content Agency

This week’s deals have treated a basic technique: setting up a suit. I believe that learning players need to spend most of their time studying play and defense, not bidding conventions.

Cover today’s East-West cards. Against four spades, West leads the K-A and jack of clubs. East discards a diamond, and you ruff and take the ace of trumps. East-West follow low. How do you continue?

If you cash the king of trumps, West discards. You can try to run the hearts, but when East turns up with J-10-9-6, you must lose a diamond plus a trump.

LONG HEART

You may need a dummy entry to set up and cash a long heart. Best is to lead a heart to dummy at Trick Five and return a trump. When East follows low, play your ten.

When the ten wins, you are safe. But if West had the queen of trumps, you could win his heart return, take a third high heart for a diamond discard and ruff a heart, then reach dummy with the jack of trumps to pitch your last low diamond on the good fifth heart.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ J 7 2 ♥ A K Q 8 3
♦ Q 5 ♣ 9 6 5. Your partner opens one diamond, you respond one heart

and he bids one spade. What do you say?

ANSWER: If partner is apt to open light hands, you are in a dilemma. But if his opening bids are reasonably sound, you can force to game. Since your best game is unclear, bid two clubs, a “fourth-suit” call that doesn’t promise great clubs but asks partner to bid on. If he bids two hearts or 2NT next, raise to game.

South dealer
Both sides vulnerable

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

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

SOUTH
♠ A K 10 8 6 3
♥ 5 2
♦ A 8 7
♣ Q 7

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	2 ♣	2 ♥	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♣ K

Daily Bridge Club

Simple Saturday

By FRANK STEWART
Tribune Content Agency

On “Simple Saturday” I focus on improving basic technique and logical thinking.

A principle of dummy play: Address the contract you reach, not one you wish you’d reached.

When today’s South saw dummy at four hearts, he would rather have been at six hearts. He won the first club with the ace, drew trumps and led another club. When West discarded, South couldn’t make even four hearts. He took the K-Q of clubs and led a diamond to his king, but the defense got three diamonds and a spade.

CONTROLS

Six hearts would have been a good contract, but the hardest slams to bid are those with two good suits, controls in the other two suits but minimum high-card strength.

At four hearts, South must allow for a 4-1 club break, especially after the opening lead. South takes only the A-J of trumps, then leads a second club. If West ruffs, he can only cash his ace of diamonds. If he discards, declarer wins, ruffs a club high, draws trumps with the queen and runs the clubs. Making five.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ K 9 6 4 ♥ 9 7 2
♦ A 10 8 5 3 ♣ 6. Your partner opens one spade. The next player

passes. What do you say?

ANSWER: This is my idea of a “limit raise” to three spades to invite game: good trump support, a shapely hand and a possible source of tricks in a side suit. Many players would bid three spades with K 9 6 4, 9 7 2, A K J 5, 6 4, but in my opinion, that hand, with concentrated side-suit values, would call for an old-fashioned response of two diamonds.

South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ 10 5
♥ Q 8 3
♦ 6 4
♣ A K Q 8 7 4

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

EAST
♠ Q J 8 2
♥ 5 4
♦ Q J 9
♣ J 10 5 2

SOUTH
♠ A 7 3
♥ A K J 10 6
♦ K 7 2
♣ 9 3

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	All Pass

Opening lead — ♣ 6

Daily Bridge Club

Weak or strong?

By **FRANK STEWART**

Tribune Content Agency

Recently I gave a talk on bidding to some club players, and I was surprised — dismayed, really — that many of them had adopted weak jump-shifts. Players often use the WJS, like many non-standard treatments, because “everybody plays them,” not because they have carefully examined the results they achieve.

I can see using the WJS at matchpoint duplicate, but at IMP scoring or Chicago, accuracy on game and slam hands is vital, and treating a jump-shift as strong will facilitate slam investigation.

In today’s deal from a team match, one South responded one diamond to North’s one club, and North bid one heart next. Then North-South misjudged by landing at six hearts, a losing contract as the cards lay.

In the replay, South jumped to two diamonds at his first turn, and North-South bid intelligently to six diamonds. (To play at a 4-4 trump fit is correct if you need the ruffing trick or tricks it will provide; that was not so here.) West led the jack of clubs.

How should South play for 12 tricks?

South played low from dummy and ruffed in his hand. He drew trumps with the A-J and next led a low heart from dummy: ten, queen, king. West led another club, and declarer discarded a heart on the ace and cashed the ace of hearts: nine,

five, jack. He threw his last heart on the king of clubs and ruffed a heart. South could then return a trump to dummy and discard his ten of spades on the good heart.

Well bid, I think, and nicely played also.

North dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ Q 6 2
♥ A 7 4 3
♦ J 10 6
♣ A K 2

WEST

♠ J 9 8 7
♥ K J 8
♦ 3
♣ J 10 9 7 4

EAST

♠ K 5 4 3
♥ 10 9
♦ 8 2
♣ Q 8 6 5 3

SOUTH

♠ A 10
♥ Q 6 5 2
♦ A K Q 9 7 5 4
♣ None

North	East	South	West
1 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
4 ♣	Pass	4 ♠	Pass
6 ♦	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♣ J

Daily Bridge Club

Only one chance

By **FRANK STEWART**
Tribune Content Agency

One of Unlucky Louie’s daughters is studying to be a cosmetologist. “She told me she overslept and missed the final in one course,” Louie told me.

“So she failed the course?”

“No,” Louie said solemnly. “They let her take a make-up exam.”

As declarer, you get just one chance. Against today’s five diamonds, West led the ace and a second club. South won, throwing a heart from dummy, and drew trumps. He threw another heart from dummy on his third high club and led a heart. West won and exited with a heart, and South lost a spade to West’s king later. Down one.

SECOND TRICK

South blew his chance at Trick Two; he must discard a spade from dummy. He draws trumps and leads the three of hearts. West must play low; if he grabs his ace, dummy’s king will furnish a spade discard.

When the king wins, South leads a trump to his hand, pitches a heart from dummy on his third high club and exits with the queen of hearts. West must lead a spade from his king or yield a ruff-sluff.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A Q ♥ Q 3
♦ A J 10 9 8 2 ♣ K Q J. You open one diamond, and your partner bids one spade. The opponents pass.

What do you say?

ANSWER: This situation is awkward. Now that partner has responded to your opening bid, game is almost certain. A jump to three diamonds would be an underbid. Some experts would bid 2NT, but that call would suggest a sure trick in hearts. I would try an improvised jump-shift to three clubs.

West dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
♠ 9 8 5 4 2
♥ K 8 4
♦ K Q 6 4
♣ 9

WEST
♠ K J 10
♥ A J 10 9 7
♦ 7
♣ A 6 5 3

EAST
♠ 7 6 3
♥ 6 5 2
♦ 5 3
♣ 10 8 7 4 2

SOUTH
♠ A Q
♥ Q 3
♦ A J 10 9 8 2
♣ K Q J

West	North	East	South
1 ♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦
Pass	4 ♦	Pass	5 ♦
All Pass			

Opening lead — ♣ A

Daily Bridge Club

Con artistry

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Tuesday, January 24. It was cool in Los Angeles. We were working the daywatch out of Bunco. My partner's Bill Gannon. He's a good player. My name's Friday.

We got a call about a scam at a Ventura club. We checked it out. The suspect was still playing. One of his opponents spoke with us.

"It was terrible, officer."

"Just the facts, ma'am."

"That man sitting South conned us out of a game. I led the king of spades against four hearts and shifted to a trump, won by dummy's king. Declarer next led the queen of spades ... and threw a diamond!"

DISCARD

"When I took the ace, I naturally led a diamond. South won with the ace and pitched clubs on the jack of diamonds and jack of spades. He's a grifter. Nab him!"

We arrested South on a charge of deceptive play. At trial, the judge said he wished he played as well.

(In an expert partnership, East would follow with his lowest spade on the queen, suggesting a shift to the low-ranking suit, so South's ruse wouldn't work.)

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A K 10 5 ♥ 7 3
♦ 8 5 4 2 ♣ 9 5 4. The dealer, at your left, opens two diamonds (a weak

two-bid). Your partner doubles, you bid two spades and partner raises to three spades. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your response ("advance" in modern terminology) promised no strength, but partner was willing to undertake a nine-trick contract nevertheless. Since you actually have seven good points, to bid four spades is clear.

South dealer

N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ Q J 4 2

♥ K

♦ K J 6

♣ Q J 10 6 2

WEST

♠ A K 10 5

♥ 7 3

♦ 8 5 4 2

♣ 9 5 4

EAST

♠ 8 7 6 3

♥ Q J 5

♦ 10 9 7

♣ A K 7

SOUTH

♠ 9

♥ A 10 9 8 6 4 2

♦ A Q 3

♣ 8 3

South

1 ♥

2 ♥

3 ♥

4 ♥

West

Pass

Pass

Pass

All Pass

North

2 ♣

2 ♠

3 NT

East

Pass

Pass

Pass

Opening lead — ♠ K

Daily Bridge Club

Second Hand Rose

By **FRANK STEWART**

Tribune Content Agency

My friend known to all as Second Hand Rose played at the club today. When the lesson about “second hand low” was taught, Rose was out on a date with Jiggs the plumber.

In a team match, both Souths played at four hearts. North’s jump to three hearts invited game. West led the king of clubs, and both declarers took dummy’s ace and casually led a diamond.

At one table, East played the nine. South took his ace, drew trumps, ruffed dummy’s last club and exited with a diamond. When East won, he had to lead a club, conceding a ruff-sluff, or a spade from his jack. South had only two more losers, making four.

REPLAY

Rose was East in the replay. When dummy led a diamond at Trick Two, Second Hand Rose ... with the king(!), a play that could hardly cost.

Play continued as at the first table, but when South exited with a diamond at the sixth trick, West took the ten and jack and led the queen, forcing dummy. South had to break the spades, and he lost two tricks there for down one.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ Q 10 3 ♥ K 10 7 5 2
♦ 6 5 2 ♣ A 5. Your partner opens

one diamond, you respond one heart and he bids two clubs. The opponents pass. What do you say?

ANSWER: Your hand is slightly too weak for a forward-going second bid of 2NT, and a rebid of two hearts would suggest weakness but a longer or at least a much more robust suit. Bid two diamonds. Maybe partner will bid again, but the contract will be playable if he must pass.

South dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ Q 10 3
♥ K 10 7 5 2
♦ 6 5 2
♣ A 5

WEST

♠ A 8 7
♥ 6
♦ Q J 10 3
♣ K Q J 9 4

EAST

♠ J 9 6 4
♥ 8 3
♦ K 9
♣ 10 8 7 6 3

SOUTH

♠ K 5 2
♥ A Q J 9 4
♦ A 8 7 4
♣ 2

South

1 ♥
4 ♥

West

2 ♣
All Pass

North

3 ♥

East

Pass

Opening lead — ♣ K

Daily Bridge Club

Zero-for-ten split

By **FRANK STEWART**
Tribune Content Agency

The fabulous Ducky van Tassel played at my club yesterday. Depending on how the stock market closed, Ducky is either the third or fourth richest person in town.

When told that Proctor and Gamble had split, Ducky said that was a shame after they had been together for so long. She is no better at addressing bad splits as declarer.

When Ducky played at today's six hearts, she ruffed the second spade, cashed the ace of trumps and muttered something unladylike when West discarded. Ducky next took the A-K of diamonds and ruffed a diamond in dummy ... and East overruffed. Ducky had to lose another trick: down two.

HIGH CLUBS

Ducky must have been thinking about her stock portfolio. After West shows out on the first trump, South can take the A-K of clubs, lead a diamond to dummy and continue with high clubs.

If East ruffs — discarding is no help — South overruffs and draws trumps. Dummy still has a trump, and South can ruff a diamond in dummy and finish the clubs to make the slam.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ K 6 ♥ 8 7 5 3 ♦ A 5 ♣ Q J 7 6 3. Your partner opens one club. The next player doubles.

What do you say?
ANSWER: To redouble, showing 10+ points, would be acceptable, but when the auction may be competitive, you may do well to give partner a description of your hand promptly. A gadget can help here: Bid 2NT, conventionally showing a limit raise of partner's suit. With a stronger hand, you would redouble. Avoid a bid of one heart.
South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ K 6
♥ 8 7 5 3
♦ A 5
♣ Q J 7 6 3

WEST	EAST
♠ Q J 10 5 4	♠ A 9 8 7 2
♥ None	♥ J 9 6 4
♦ Q J 9 6	♦ 10 3
♣ 10 9 5 2	♣ 8 4

SOUTH
♠ 3
♥ A K Q 10 2
♦ K 8 7 4 2
♣ A K

South	West	North	East
1 ♥	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♥	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♠ Q

Daily Bridge Club

Senior moments

By **FRANK STEWART**
Tribune Content Agency

A senior player at my club told me about the benefits of getting older: Your joints are more reliable than the weatherman; your eyes can't get much worse, and there are fewer things to learn the hard way.

My friend was today's South.

"Our auction left a lot to be desired," he said. "We should have bid 6NT. I knew my partner had something in spades; I wasn't sure he had a source of tricks in diamonds."

Against six hearts, West led the queen of clubs. South took the ace and led a trump to dummy's king and a trump to his queen. West took the ace and led a second club, and East had to score his ten of trumps for down one.

UNLUCKY

South was unlucky. After dummy's king wins, South succeeds by returning to his hand to lead a second low trump, but West might have held A-10-6-4.

North-South did learn a hard lesson in the bidding: Play at a 4-4 trump fit only when you need extra tricks with ruffs. Either player could have bid differently to reach 6NT with the 33 points.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A K J ♥ K J 9 2
♦ Q J 8 6 5 ♣ 10. You open one diamond, and your partner responds

one spade. What do you say?

ANSWER: If your partner had responded one heart, you would have had an easy raise to three hearts. His actual one-spade response is awkward. Your hand is borderline at best for a "reverse" to two hearts, but many players would choose that action. An option is to raise to three spades, hoping he has five or more spades.

South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH
♠ A K J
♥ K J 9 2
♦ Q J 8 6 5
♣ 10

WEST
♠ 8 4
♥ A 4
♦ 10 2
♣ Q J 9 8 7 4 2

EAST
♠ 9 7 6 5 3 2
♥ 10 6 5
♦ 7 4 3
♣ 5

SOUTH
♠ Q 10
♥ Q 8 7 3
♦ A K 9
♣ A K 6 3

South	West	North	East
1 ♣	Pass	1 ♦	Pass
1 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
6 ♥	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♣ Q

Daily Bridge Club

Simple Saturday

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

“Simple Saturday” columns focus on improving basic technique and developing logical thinking.

The cheetahs made it into the Ark, but so did the snails. Take your time as declarer. Form a plan before you play. Hasty play has scuttled many easy contracts.

Today’s auction was hit-or-miss: South’s 4NT Blackwood bid was an error since North could have held a hand such as Q J 2, Q 8 7 4, K J 8, A 10 5. Against six hearts, West led the deuce of spades, and the play ended early when South finessed with dummy’s queen. East took the king and cashed his ace of clubs.

TWO SPADES

Apparently, declarer never met a finesse he didn’t like. Even assuming that West had the king of spades, South needed to pick up the trump suit to make his slam. But if he could draw trumps, he could then run the diamonds to pitch two spades from dummy, losing only a club to the ace.

South’s play of the queen of spades was a “practice finesse” that couldn’t gain even it won. He must take the ace and finesse in trumps.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ 9 8 ♥ A K J 10 ♦ A Q 10 9 2 ♣ K J. Only your side is vulnerable. The dealer, at your right, opens three clubs.

What do you say?

ANSWER: This problem is awkward and would divide an expert panel. If you double and partner responds three spades, you can’t strand him there, but if you continue with four diamonds, he may think you have a better hand. Bid three diamonds though you would make that call with less strength.

South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ A Q 7
♥ 9 8 7 4
♦ K J 8
♣ Q 10 4

WEST

♠ 10 6 5 2
♥ 5 2
♦ 7 5 4
♣ 9 7 6 3

EAST

♠ K J 4 3
♥ Q 6 3
♦ 6 3
♣ A 8 5 2

SOUTH

♠ 9 8
♥ A K J 10
♦ A Q 10 9 2
♣ K J

South	West	North	East
1 ♦	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
6 ♥	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♠ 2

Daily Bridge Club

No excuses

By **FRANK STEWART**

Tribune Content Agency

With apologies to “Dilbert,” here’s another real-life memo from a harried project manager:

“Doing it right is no excuse for not meeting the schedule.”

Some players seem to think it’s not whether you make your contract or go down, it’s how much time you take to do it. In today’s deal, North’s response of two hearts was a “transfer” to spades, and South’s jump to three spades showed good spades and lively game interest. (I am not a fan of these “super accepts,” which sometimes convert a plus score into a minus, but if South was ever going to indulge in one, this was the hand for it.)

Against four spades, West led a low club: four, jack, ace. South drew trumps and next led the ace and a second diamond. West won with the queen and shifted to the five of hearts. When South tried dummy’s ten, East’s jack covered. South took his queen and led another diamond, but West won and led a second heart through the king to East’s A-9 for down one.

“At least you didn’t take all day to go down,” North observed gloomily.

South could have survived by playing dummy’s king on the first heart lead, but he lost his contract through hasty play at Trick One. He can let East’s jack of clubs win, trading a diamond loser for a club

loser. If East shifts to a diamond, South takes the ace, draws trumps, discards a diamond from dummy on the ace of clubs and concedes a diamond.

West shifts to a heart: ten, jack, queen. South then ruffs a diamond and returns a trump to his hand to take the 13th diamond for his 10th trick.

South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ Q J 10 9 8 7
♥ K 10 2
♦ 7 6 2
♣ 4

WEST

♠ 4 2
♥ 8 6 5
♦ K Q 9
♣ Q 10 8 3 2

EAST

♠ 3
♥ A J 9 4
♦ J 8 3
♣ K J 9 7 5

SOUTH

♠ A K 6 5
♥ Q 7 3
♦ A 10 5 4
♣ A 6

South
1 NT
3 ♠

West
Pass
Pass

North
2 ♥
4 ♠

East
Pass
All Pass

Opening lead — ♣ 3

Daily Bridge Club

What's the difference?

By FRANK STEWART

Tribune Content Agency

Cy the Cynic had been absent from the club.

“What have you been up to?” I asked when he showed up for a penny game.

“Tending to my taxes,” Cy said shortly.

“Do you use Form 1040 or 1040A?”

“The only difference,” the Cynic growled, “is whether the IRS or your CPA gets your money.”

As today's declarer, Cy learned that the play to the first trick can make all the difference. When West led the ten of diamonds against four hearts, Cy swiftly covered with dummy's jack: queen, ace. Cy drew trumps and led another diamond, but East won with the eight and shifted to a club. The defense got a club, the ace of spades and East's king of diamonds. Down one.

PLAYS LOW

Cy erred at Trick One. He must play low from dummy and from his hand.

If West shifts to a trump — nothing else is better — Cy draws trumps and leads the ace and another diamond. East can win and lead a club, but Cy takes the ace and discards his club loser on dummy's diamonds, losing only three tricks in all.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ A J 10 6 2 ♥ 6 4

♦ 10 ♣ K 8 6 3 2. Neither side vulnerable. The dealer, at your right, opens one heart. What do you say?

ANSWER: Even in a sound overcalling style, this type of hand demands action. Many players would bid one spade. A conventional option is a “Michaels” cue bid of two hearts, promising length in spades and one of the minor suits. That call typically shows a hand with playing tricks but limited defensive strength.

West dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH

♠ K 7 5
♥ Q 9 2
♦ J 9 7 3 2
♣ Q 5

WEST

♠ A J 10 6 2
♥ 6 4
♦ 10
♣ K 8 6 3 2

EAST

♠ 8 4 3
♥ 8 7 3
♦ K Q 8
♣ J 10 9 4

SOUTH

♠ Q 9
♥ A K J 10 5
♦ A 6 5 4
♣ A 7

West

Pass

1 ♠

All Pass

North

Pass

2 ♥

East

Pass

Pass

South

1 ♥

4 ♥

Opening lead — ♦ 10

Daily Bridge Club

Excitement in the play

By FRANK STEWART
Tribune Content Agency

A middle-aged couple had joined my club and was playing in duplicate games.

“They say they want to make their marriage more exciting,” Cy the Cynic told me as we were sitting in the lounge.

“I tried to add some excitement to my marriage,” Unlucky Louie sighed, “but my wife found out.”

“How well do they play?” I asked the Cynic.

“You be the judge,” Cy said, displaying today’s deal. “They were North-South. Their bidding to four spades was fine, but the husband was declarer and made the play more exciting than it should have been. I was West and led the ten of clubs. My partner took the ace and returned the five.”

THIRD TRICK

“Declarer won and led a trump at the third trick. I took the ace and led a third club, and East ruffed and cashed his ace of hearts for down one.”

“I think I get the idea,” I said.

Declarer had a blind spot. After he wins the second club, he must take dummy’s A-K of diamonds to discard his last high club. Then he can lead a trump safely.

DAILY QUESTION

You hold: ♠ J 3 ♥ Q 10 9 2
♦ A K J 4 ♣ 6 4 2. The dealer, at

your left, opens three clubs. Your partner doubles, and the next player passes. What do you say?

ANSWER: You have 11 good points, and your partner was willing to play for nine tricks even if you had none. He will usually have support for the unbid suits, especially for the majors. Jump to four hearts. If partner’s hand is A K 8 7, A K 8 4, Q 7 6 5, 3, you may take 12 tricks.

South dealer
N-S vulnerable

NORTH

♠ J 3
♥ Q 10 9 2
♦ A K J 4
♣ 6 4 2

WEST

♠ A
♥ 8 7 5 3
♦ 9 3 2
♣ 10 9 8 7 3

EAST

♠ 8 6 2
♥ A J 4
♦ Q 10 8 7 5
♣ A 5

SOUTH

♠ K Q 10 9 7 5 4
♥ K 6
♦ 6
♣ K Q J

South	West	North	East
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	2 NT	Pass
4 ♠	All Pass		

Opening lead — ♣ 10