

Board of the Week 43

By Dick Chapman

Allan S. teaches "count and visualize" and we lesser instructors try to both do that and teach that. Sometimes we fail, as I will demonstrate in the following narrative. In third seat as West you hold...

♠AK64 ♥J4 ♦A54 ♣KQ95

...and open a strong no trump. Partner 2 hearts ("spades"), back to you. Your call?

Partner holds 13 cards including 5 spades and holds somewhere between 0 and 23 hcp. Do you superaccept with 3 spades, or go low with 2? It's the second board of the day, so you don't have to shoot the moon to get back in the game. Decide now, then read on.

I bid 3 spades. Some hours later, in the post-game analysis, Larry Cohen says West, holding 17 hcp and 4 trump, should bid 3 spades. Partner tanks and comes out with 4 spades. Now you have to make it, on the lead of the diamond 6. You see this:

♠AK64 ♥J4 ♦A54 ♣KQ95		♠J9873 ♥K102 ♦K82 ♣42
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Certainly East would have passed your non-superacceptance of 2 spades. Do you agree with East's move to game over your 3 spade call? Not that Larry Cohen knows anything about bridge, but he does agree: "opposite 17 and with a 9-card fit, this hand is worth bumping to game."

I won the lead in dummy, ran a club to the king and North's ace, won the second diamond, and drew two rounds of trump to discover a 3-1 trump break. A heart toward the king and thankfully North jumps up with the ace. I ended up down 1, losing one of each suit.

Because I played the hand in record time, there was plenty of time for discussion around the table. All four of us found the auction interesting. However, if we had all that time to discuss the unhappy result, why didn't I use some of it to visualize a better way to play the board? I saw only too late there is a way to make. Now I ask readers to take some time to visualize a way to make 10 tricks, and I will remind you that both missing aces are in the North hand. Give it some thought while I go have a coffee. Don't peek at the next column until you work it out.

(While you think, a concert version of Callas and *O Mio Babbino Caro*):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1C8NFDdFYg>

The full deal is shown:

	♠Q105 ♥A53 ♦Q1096 ♣AJ10	
♠AK64 ♥J4 ♦A54 ♣KQ95		♠J9873 ♥K102 ♦K82 ♣42
	♠2 ♥Q9876 ♦J73 ♣8763	

Ok, I had a little bad luck with the spade break. But did you visualize a better line of play? Try this:

Win the diamond lead in dummy and advance a club immediately. This loses, and you win the second diamond in hand. Now one round of trump (in case the queen is singleton) then a second top club. Next, ruff a club high. Back to hand with the second spade. Bad luck on the spade suit, but did you see what happened on the second and third club? The J and 10 fell. You are now in hand with a good club 9. Lead it and discard the losing diamond in dummy. North can ruff with the top trump, but that doesn't help the defense as you are using a loser-on-loser play.

Yes, you had a bit of luck in that the club AJ10 were in North. But if you were really lucky, the ace would have been in the South hand and the trumps would have divided 2-2. Just play the cards you have, and take advantage of any favorable position of the opponents' cards. And visualize what that favorable position might be.

You lose one spade, one heart (the ace being onside), and 1 club. As mentioned, the diamond loser has evaporated. You need the second trump to get back to the fourth club. You might have been overruffed on the third club (embarrassing if the trumps were 2-2, but a 4-3 division of the suit is 62% so it's a risk worth taking).

Several players at the club made 10, some (like me) made 9, and some made 8. The leads varied, but it makes 10 on any lead if you take the line of play I discovered later.

Here's a revelation for you: It's better to discover a winning line at the table than when you are looking over the hand record after the game.

See you at the table.