Board of the Week 49

By Dick Chapman

Most intermediate and advanced players know the principle of Restricted Choice. The mathematicians among us would refer to Bayes' theorem on conditional probability, which has a formula I can't even read, let alone understand. So forget the math and go with a general concept: when you are looking for two adjacent honors and one of them falls, play the other hand for the other honor.

An example:

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Dummy
♥AJ109
♥87654
Your hand

</div>

You lead low to the jack and East wins the queen. You regain the lead and attack the suit again. Do you play for the drop or finesse? Nine never? No, the answer is to finesse again. East plays the queen when it is singleton, but will have a choice of cards (KQ) when it is doubleton. The odds are much greater that West holds the king. You can read about this concept in various bridge publications.

Now to the hand in question. You are playing in a Sectional and the auction is wild. As East, you hold these cards

<div align="center">

♠A108642 ♥A854 ♦106 ♣A

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…and as dealer open 1 spade. South pass, Partner 2 diamonds, game forcing. North 4 clubs. Wow, it got rich very quickly. What is your call?

You bid 4 spades and partner bids 5 spades. What is <u>that</u>? Decide, then read further. See next column.

In a competitive auction, an unforced raise to five of your suit asks partner to bid slam with first round control in the opponents' suit. That's what I did in this hand, six spades. I won the opening lead and found this layout:

♠K6		♠A108642
♥KQJ3	Imps	♥A854
♦AKJ98	V: EW	♦106
♣72		♣A

At trick 2 I led a spade and South put up the queen. I won the king and led a spade back to my hand. What should I play? Ace or 10? Keeping in mind the principle of restricted choice, make your decision and check out the next page for commentary.

Did you remember the auction? North bid 4 clubs! The principle of restricted choice is a mathematical concept that is based on an absence of further information. You have much additional information so the principle doesn't apply here.

You can afford one loser, right? If you play the ace at trick 3, you will fail only if North holds exactly J9xx. What are the odds of that holding when a player holds 8 or more clubs? It's not impossible, but it's far more likely that North has 2 or 3 spades than 4 to the jack. Play the ace. If the jack doesn't fall, you lose that trick later and claim 12 tricks.

At the table, I muttered something about restricted choice as I played the 10 only to see that card lose to South's jack. I am still ok, I think, because I stood to lose a spade anyway. What happened next? South led a diamond and North, with a third spade, ruffs! North had started with a diamond void! Oh me. Lose a ton of imps as the slam was making at the other table. The full hand:

	♠975 ♥10 ♦ ♣QJ10986543	
♠K6 ♥KQJ3 ♦AKJ98 ♣72		♠A108642 ♥A854 ♦106 ♣A
	♠QJ ♥9762 ♦Q75432 ♣K	

This is what happens when you have a small amount of bridge knowledge. You tend to apply this knowledge without regard to nasty little things like facts.

My admonition is to use the principles you learn, but use them judiciously and with regard to the situation on the ground. Or, as I have heard said, "it's ok to remember the auction when you are playing the cards."

This hand plays 6 spades with ease, if I think. Actually, because I didn't get a diamond lead it plays for 7 spades. Ok, ok, let's get technical and observe that it is cold for 7NT. No defense beats it: you get 6 spades, 4 hearts, 2 diamonds, and a club. If you drop the spade QJ, that is, and your 10 of spades brings in the 9. A 29 point grand slam, if you are a point counter.

See you at the table. Maybe I'll bring my feeble brain with me next time.