

These hands are from Eddie Kantar's wonderful series "Thinking Bridge"

Dir: North
Vul: Neither

	North	
	S. 632	
	H. 94	
	D. AK7	
	C. AQ643	
West		East
S. 10		S. AKQJ4
H. AKQ1073		H. J862
D. J106		D. 73
C. KJ8		C. 102
	South	
	S. 9875	
	H. 5	
	D. Q9542	
	C. 975	

North	East	South	West
1C	1S	Pass	3H
Pass	4H	All Pass	

Opening lead: DA

Bidding Commentary: As West, a 2H response to partner's 1S overcall is typically played as not forcing. It is usually made with a hand that has a reasonable six card suit and 8-12 HCP. A jump response (3H) shows a strong six (or seven) card suit and 13-15 HCP. The jump is played as invitational by most, forcing by some. You and your partner should agree on the meaning of 3H in this sequence. However, any jump response beneath game after partner makes a two level overcall is 100% forcing. Decide with your partner how you plan to play jump responses to one level overcalls.

Defensive Commentary: As South, signal encouragement with the D9 to show an equal honor (the queen) or a doubleton.

Defensive Commentary #2 As North, when partner plays the D9 showing a doubleton or the queen, it may be important to work out which. The way you determine which is to ask this question: If partner has a doubleton, how many diamonds does that give declarer and is the answer consistent with the bidding? In this case it would give declarer six diamonds and that is not consistent with the bidding so partner must be showing the queen. Your next play should be a low diamond (the key play) to partner's queen. After all, don't you want partner to lead a club through declarer's likely king before declarer pitches clubs on dummy's imposing spades? Of course you do.

Defensive Commentary # 3 As South, if partner leads a low diamond at trick two, step up smartly with the queen and shift to a high club. This defense leaves declarer no recourse. The defense takes the first four tricks.

Dlr: North
Vul: Both

	North	
	S. A53	
	H. KJ3	
	D. A98	
	C. Q932	
West		East
S. Q972		S. 106
H. 1095		H. Q84
D. K106		D. Q743
C. A85		C. K764
	South	
	S. KJ84	
	H. A762	
	D. J52	
	C. J10	

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	1H	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

Opening lead: D3

Bidding Commentary: With two four card majors, South responds 'up the line' bidding hearts first. With two five card suits, the first response is in the higher ranking suit. South is not strong enough to bid again after the 1NT rebid. To raise to 2NT with this distribution you need 11-12 HCP.

Lead Commentary: As East, once North bids clubs, a diamond lead is preferred. As for leading a spade, keep in mind that partner had a chance to overcall 1S and didn't. If partner has a chance to overcall a suit at the one level and doesn't, chances are he doesn't have a strong five card suit.

Play Commentary: As North, with this diamond combination, play low from dummy. If East has the D10, you will take two diamond tricks.

Defensive Commentary: As West, when dummy plays low at trick one, insert the D10, not the DK! When partner leads low and dummy has an honor (DJ) and you have a higher honor (DK) and a lower honor (D10) insert the lower honor. Important.

Play Commentary: As North, after winning the third diamond, count your sure tricks. You have five, the DA and the AK of both major suits. Before rushing to take a finesse in either major suit, consider your combined club holding. You have the QJ109 between the two hands and can easily develop two tricks from the suit. Besides, you are working with a suit where you have to lose tricks in any case, the ideal situation. Whenever you can secure your contract by developing tricks in a suit(s) where you have sure losers no matter what, that's the way to go. If you fiddle around taking finesses in the majors (a finesseaholic play) you will go down! Attack clubs.

Dlr: N
Vul: E-W

	North	
	S. 732	
	H. 1087	
	D. KQ865	
	C. 65	
West		East
S. AKQ		S. 8654
H. AQ5		H. 942
D. J		D. 432
C. AKQJ104		C. 932
	South	
	S. J109	
	H. KJ63	
	D. A1097	
	C. 87	

West	North	East	South
2C	Pass	2D	Pass
3C	Pass	3D	Pass
5C	All Pass		

Opening lead: DK

Bidding Commentary: How should one respond to a 2C opening bid with a bust (no ace, no king and no two queens)? One method is to respond 2H directly. Another is to start with 2D, denying a strong suit. If opener bids 2H or 2S, a rebid of 3C, artificial, shows a bust. If opener bids 3C, a 3D rebid by responder, artificial, shows a bust. Another possibility is to show high card points at once by steps. A fourth method is to show controls (ace and kings) by steps. Each method has its plusses and minuses. What's important is a partnership agreement. **EVEN A BAD AGREEMENT IS BETTER THAN NO AGREEMENT.** Here 2D followed by 3D over 3C was used to show a bust.

Defensive Commentary: South plays the D10 at trick one, higher equal when encouraging. Given the looks of this dummy, a passive defense (avoid breaking news suits) is in order. As North, continue with a low diamond at trick two as requested.

Play Commentary: As West, trump the second diamond high! If clubs divide 2-2, the C9 will provide a dummy entry-if you have save the precious C4. After clubs divide 2-2, it can't cost to play the AKQ of spades in case they break 3-3. It's your lucky day, they do! Now it is easy enough to cross to the C9, discard a heart on dummy's S9, and take the heart finesse for an overtrick. Be sure to tell your partner after you make an overtrick that in the future you expect her to bid more aggressively with wonderful hands.

When holding a powerful trump suit facing a bleak dummy and forced to trump early, consider trumping high rather than low. That low trump may be your salvation- it may be your only egress to dummy!

Dlr: East
Vul: N-S

	North	
	S. A74	
	H. Q1052	
	D. 10862	
	C. K4	
West		East
S. 103		S. QJ9
H. 876		H. AK4
D. Q73		D. AK5
C. AQJ65		C. 10932
	South	
	S. K8652	
	H. J93	
	D. J94	
	C. 87	

East	South	West	North
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

Opening lead: S5

Bidding Commentary: As West you can tack on 2 extra points holding a five card suit headed by the AKQ, AKJ, AQJ, AQ10 or KQJ facing a known balanced hand. Add 1 extra point with a five card suit headed by three slightly weaker honors: the AJ10, KQ10, KJ10 or QJ10.

Defensive Commentary: As North, win the SA and return the S7, the higher of two remaining cards.

Play Commentary: As East, fearing that South might duck the 2nd spade, thus retaining communications with the North hand, you might try a little subterfuge. One possibility is to play the 9 and then the queen, concealing the jack. Another is to play the jack and then the queen, concealing the 9.

Defensive Commentary: As South, no matter how East plays her spades, go by the card your partner returns to get an honest count. If East plays the S9 and SQ and those are East's only two spades, partner has started with the AJ74 and would (should) have return the 4, the lowest of three remaining cards. If East plays the J and Q, concealing the 9, it shouldn't work. If the jack and queen are honest cards, partner started with the A974 and would return the 4. The bottom line is that you should duck the second spade because declarer remains with a high spade and you want to keep a spade in partner's hand in case partner has an early entry.

Play Commentary: As East, if South ducks the second spade, there is not much you can do other than take the club finesse. Not this time. North wins and returns the S4 allowing South to cash three spades and defeat the contract one trick.

After you make an opening lead and partner wins and returns your suit, watch the spot cards closely so you know what is going on. Remember, partner returns the higher of two remaining cards and the lowest of three remaining cards. That should help.

Dlr: S
Vul: Neither

	North	
	S. Q86	
	H. 10964	
	D. KQ4	
	C. J82	
West		East
S. A954		S. KJ1032
H. KQJ2		H. –
D. A53		D. 9864
C. 74		C. A653
	South	
	S. 7	
	H. A8753	
	D. J102	
	C. KQ109	

South	West	North	East
Pass	1D	Pass	1S
Dbl.	2S	Pass	4S
All Pass			

Opening lead: CK

Bidding Commentary: As West, the system opening is 1D with this hand pattern. This is the only distribution one should have for a short diamond opening. A 1D opening with this distribution occurs about 5% of the time 1D is opened. As responder, assume your partner has four or more diamonds when you hear partner open 1D. Don't play for exceptions! If you do, in this case, you will be wrong 95% of the time!

South's passed hand takeout double shows 9-11 HCP with four cards, minimum, in the two unbid suits. East is entitled to reevaluate upwards with a likely 9 card spade fit (worth an automatic 2 point upgrade) plus wild side suit distribution, worth another 2 points. The East hand logs in at about 13 revalued points and is worth a shot at game. If 4S seems a bit rich for your blood, try 3S. West, with a maximum, will raise to 4S.

Defensive Commentary: As North assuming the lead of the king is from the KQ and not the AK, tend to encourage holding the jack. However, with your diamond holding it is better to discourage in clubs (C2) to encourage a shift to diamonds.

Play Commentary: As East, fearing a diamond shift, win the CA, cross to the SA and run the HK to South's ace, discarding a diamond. Assuming South wins and shifts to a diamond, win the ace, discard your remaining two diamonds on the QJ of hearts and concede a club. The most you can lose after this is maybe a spade trick. The idea is not to cash the SK before the dummy is void in clubs. If you do, and the player who wins your club exit is able to cash the SQ depriving you of a club ruff in dummy, down you go. You could lose two clubs (instead of one) the HA and the SQ. Be careful about surrendering trump control (SK) until dummy is void in the suit you plan to ruff.

Dlr: West
Vul: N-S

	North	
	S. 65	
	H. 10873	
	D. 54	
	C. AQJ106	
West		East
S. J1092		S. 8743
H. 9		H. 104
D. AQJ10		D. K8762
C. 9853		C. 42
	South	
	S. AKQ	
	H. AKQJ52	
	D. 93	
	C. K7	

South	West	North	East
2C	Pass	3C	Pass
3H	Pass	4H	Pass
4S	Pass	5C	Pass
5H	All Pass		

Opening lead: DA

Bidding Commentary: Notice that North-South cuebid looking for a possible slam and do not use Blackwood. Why? Because the player who uses Blackwood is not supposed to have two or more quick losers in any unbid suit. (Check the N-S diamonds). It is becoming increasingly clear as the bidding progresses that neither has a diamond control (ace, king, singleton or void) If neither has a diamond control, there is no slam. Cuebidding is designed to help you stay out of no-play slams. It also pinpoints the opening lead against opponents who aren't deaf.

Lead Commentary: As West, when the opponents turn somersaults during the bidding cuebidding their heads off, and still stop short of slam never mentioning one suit, they are telling you something. That is, neither one has first or second round control in that suit. So when it is your lead, lead that suit. Period. It doesn't matter what you have in the suit, lead it! If you have the AQ, partner has the king. If you have the king, partner has the ace. If you have nothing in the suit, partner has the AK. Without a diamond lead, declarer has 14 tricks; with one, only 11.

Rules were meant to be broken. 'Never lead from an AQ' and 'Never lead from a king' are just guidelines, not hard and fast rules. For example, the bidding on this hand has told you what to lead, so lead it. Another sequence that tells you what to lead is one like this (opener and responder bidding): 1C-3C, 3D-3S, 4C-5C. What's going on? Opener's 3D rebid shows diamond strength probably looking to land in 3NT. The 3S bid shows spade strength but denies hearts strength. With both majors stopped, responder bids 3NT. Notice that opener didn't bid 3NT over 3S. Why? Because opener doesn't have a heart stopper either. If you find yourself on lead against a sequence like this, lead a heart even if you are void in hearts!

QUESTIONS? Contact Lynn at LynnYokel@gmail.com