

Column 143 By Andrew Robson

The 1998 Lederer Memorial Trophy drew together arguably the strongest ever field - Tony Forrester, Zia Mahmood, a top Norwegian team and almost all of Britain's top experts were in the eight invited teams

Our first hand illustrates the importance of the opening lead.

		Dealer South	North-South	Vulnerable			
		North					
		♠ 104					
		♥ AKQ43					
		♦ AJ2					
West	♣ 983	East	South	The Bidding		East	
♠ 986		♠ K	1♠	West	North	pass	
♥ -		♥ 1098752	3♠	pass	2♥	pass	
♦ K10953		♦ Q8764	6♠	pass	5♠	pass	
♣ Q10742		♣ K		pass	pass	pass	
		South					
		♠ AQJ7532					
		♥ J7					
		♦ -					
		♣ AJ65					

When this hand occurred in the match between Zia's All Stars (Zia partnering Andrew Robson, Gunnar Hallberg partnering Colin Simpson) and London, the All Stars took a major tumble.

In one room a diamond was led to the slam. The declarer for London won dummy's ace and led the ten of spades. He captured East's king with the ace, drew trumps, then ran his hearts. He made all thirteen tricks.

In the other room your columnist was declaring Six Spades for the All Stars, but Liggins for London found the best lead of a club. I won East's king with the ace and was not clairvoyant enough to lay down the ace of trumps. Seeking to cross to dummy to take the spade finesse, I led the seven of hearts. West ruffed, cashed the queen of clubs and led a club for East to ruff. Down two - and an huge adverse slam swing against the All Stars.

Zia handled the following game contract nicely.

		Dealer West	North-South	Vulnerable			
		♠ K1043					
		♥ J653					
		♦ Q1032					
West	♣ A	East	South	The Bidding		East	
♠ A6		♠ J985		West	North	pass	
♥ 9		♥ 1072	1♥	pass	4♥	pass	
♦ AJ8764		♦ K	pass	pass			
♣ KQJ8		♣ 109542					
		South					
		♠ Q72					
		♥ AKQ84					
		♦ 95					
		♣ 763					

West led the king of clubs and Zia won dummy's ace, crossed to the queen of hearts and led the nine of diamonds. This ran to East's king and East returned a second club, ruffed in dummy. Zia played a second trump to his king, West discarding a diamond, and led the five of diamonds. West correctly played low and East ruffed dummy's ten with his last trump and returned a third club, ruffed with dummy's last trump. Zia needed to avoid losing two spade tricks - can you see what he did?

Zia ruffed a third diamond and led the two of spades. West played low and Zia rose with dummy's king, knowing in the light of the bidding that it would win the trick. He then led the three of spades and ducked it. West's ace "beat air" and Zia's queen of spades was his tenth trick.

The Lederer traditionally awards prizes for the best bid hand, the best played hand and the best defended hand. Unusually in 1998, the prize for the best played hand went to a defender - for finding a switch that was not found at any other table. Cover up West and South's hands and see if you can replicate East's defence:

		Dealer North	North-South Vulnerable			
		North				
		♠ K107				
		♥ K9652				
		♦ KQ984				
West	♣ -	East	South	The Bidding		
♠ 2		♠ J853		West	North	East
♥ 743		♥ QJ	1 ♠	pass	1 ♥	pass
♦ J1032		♦ A76	3 ♣ 1	pass	2 ♦	pass
♣ KQ972		♣ 10854	6 ♠	pass	3 ♠	pass
		South				
		♠ AQ964				
		♥ A108				
		♦ 5	1 Fourth Suit Forcing			
		♣ AJ63				

West led the king of clubs and declarer, the young Norwegian Tomas Charlsen, won the ace, discarding a heart from dummy, and led the five of diamonds to dummy's queen. East won the ace and made the switch that won him the prize - what should he play and why?

East can count declarer's tricks on, say, a club return. He will be able to cross-ruff all eight trumps and score the ace and king of hearts, the king of diamonds and the ace of clubs - twelve tricks. To prevent declarer from scoring all his trumps separately, East bravely returned a spade - even though he was nullifying the power of the guarded knave. Declarer won cheaply in dummy, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a club and was in a position to claim his contract if both opponents had followed to the king of trumps: he would ruff a third diamond, draw the last opposing trump discarding a heart, cross to the king of hearts and discard his third heart and last club on the king and established nine of diamonds. But West discarded on the king of trumps. Declarer could still have made the contract because the queen and knave of hearts were doubleton. Refusing to play for such an unlikely scenario, Charlsen continued his plan of establishing dummy's diamonds. He lost trump control and went two down. Did you find the trump switch?

We leave the tournament with the All Stars making the early running, and continue our report next week.

Column 144 By Andrew Robson

Our report of the 1998 Lederer resumes with a look at the conventional ways in which two-suited hands can be described after the opponents have opened.

On our first hand North's Two Notrump overcall shows at least five cards in both minors - the "Unusual Notrump".

		Dealer West	Both Vulnerable			
		North				
		♠ K9				
		♥ A				
		♦ AQ1076				
West	♣ AK853	East	South	The Bidding		
♠ AJ754		♠ -		West	North	East
♥ KJ10		♥ Q9643	3 ♦	1 ♠*1	2NT	pass
♦ J32		♦ 854	pass	pass	5 ♦*2	pass
♣ Q4		♣ J10972		pass		
		South				
		♠ Q108632				
		♥ 8752				
		♦ K9				
		♣ 6				

*1 One Notrump is a preferable opening to avoid the rebid problem.

*2 Having already shown five cards in both minors, a bid of Three Notrump at this point best describes North's hand.

West led the knave of hearts and declarer won dummy's ace. He worked out an opposing layout that allowed him to succeed and continued as follows. He cashed the ace of clubs and ruffed a low club. He ruffed a heart, crossed to the king of diamonds and ruffed a third heart. He cashed the ace and queen of trumps, breathing a sigh of relief when they split evenly, cashed the king of clubs, and led the king of spades.

West, with only four spades remaining, was unable to take more than his ace and knave. At the table he ducked the king, but won declarer's nine of spades continuation with the knave. He cashed the ace but had to give the last trick to declarer's queen.

Our second hand from the Lederer Teams is most unusual. A sacrifice over a Grand Slam is rare enough in itself but particularly so at the unfavourable vulnerability. However with Seven Diamonds by East-West an easy make - scoring 1440 - South's decision would be correct providing Seven Spades went for less than 1440.

		Dealer West	North-South	Vulnerable			
		♠ AQJ73					
		♥ Q97642					
		♦ 10					
		♣ 2					
		The Bidding					
West		East	South	West	North	East	
♠ 92		♠ -		1♦	2♦*1	7♦	
♥ 5		♥ AK10	7♠	double	pass	pass	
♦ KJ852		♦ AQ97643	pass				
♣ AQ643		♣ KJ10					
		South					
		♠ K108654					
		♥ J83					
		♦ -					
		♣ 9875					
		*1 Shows at least five cards in both majors - the Michaels convention					

West's five of hearts lead was won by East's king. He cashed the ace of hearts and led a third heart. West ruffed, cashed the ace of clubs and led a diamond to East's ace. Declarer could ruff and claim the remainder. He had gone four down - a loss of 1100 points but a gain of 340 points compared with his fate defending Seven Diamonds.

Let me issue a word of warning about sacrifice bidding - it only works when both the opponents were making their contract and your contract goes down less than the value of their making contract. Do you remember sacrificing and later discovering that the opponents would not have made their contract - the dreaded "phantom sacrifice"? Michael Rosenberg - one of US's finest players though Scottish by birth - has a simple philosophy about sacrificing - "Don't".

The Principle of Restricted Choice states that when an opponent has turned up with a critical card, his partner is twice as likely to have the adjacent card. Cover up the East-West cards and see if you can apply the Principle on our final hand?

		Dealer South	Neither Side	Vulnerable			
		North					
		♠ 652					
		♥ AKQ87					
		♦ Q108					
		♣ 97					
		The Bidding					
West		East	South	West	North	East	
♠ J		♠ A1083	1♠	pass	2♥	pass	
♥ 6542		♥ J1093	3♣	pass	3♠	pass	
♦ AJ9532		♦ 7	4♣	pass	4♠	pass	
♣ Q5		♣ J1084	pass	pass			
		South					
		♠ KQ974					
		♥ -					
		♦ K64					
		♣ AK632					

West found the best attack - leading the ace of diamonds and following with a second diamond for East to ruff (declarer unblocking the king). East returned the four of clubs and declarer won the king and led the king of spades. East won the ace, West playing the knave, and led a second club, declarer winning the ace. How should he continue?

West following with the knave of spades means that East is twice as likely to have the ten - the Principle of Restricted Choice. Declarer should ruff a third club, and play a spade to East's eight and his nine. When West discards, he draws East's ten with his queen and crosses to dummy's queen of diamonds to discard his club losers on dummy's hearts.

The All Star Team (including Zia Mahmood and Andrew Robson) continued to lead the Lederer in spite of a reverse on the above hand. Though playing the hand in the recommended manner, South, your columnist, had shown too much exuberance in the bidding and had ended up in Five Spades - down one.

Column 145 By Andrew Robson

We conclude our report of the 1998 Lederer, beginning with a hand that further enhanced the chances of the team leading two-thirds of the way through the tournament - The All Stars (Zia Mahmood partnering your columnist and Gunnar Hallberg partnering Colin Simpson).

		Dealer West	North-South		Vulnerable	
		North				
		♠ J96				
		♥ 1083				
		♦ AJ63				
		♣ AJ4				
West		East	South	The Bidding		
				West	North	East
	♠ Q10532		♠ A87	pass	pass	1♥*1
	♥ K743		♥ AJ952	4♣*2	double	4♥
	♦ K1092		♦ 84	pass	pass	double
	♣ -		♣ Q75	pass	pass	
		South				
		♠ K4				
		♥ Q				
		♦ Q75				
		♣ K1098632				

*1 Opening light in 3rd seat is winning bridge

*2 A Splinter bid - showing short clubs and good heart support.

West's Four Club Splinter bid allowed North to double to show his club support, thus enabling South, Zia, to bid on to Five Clubs. Had West simply jumped to Four Hearts, East-West would doubtless have bought the contract right there.

West led a heart to East's ace and declarer's queen and East correctly reasoned that a switch to spades was necessary in case declarer could discard a spade loser on a diamond winner in dummy. He cashed the ace of spades and led a second spade to declarer's king. Declarer crossed to the ace of clubs exposing West's void, ran the knave, crossed to his king drawing East's queen, and played a low diamond to dummy's knave. When that held, he ruffed a heart and ran all his trumps. On the last trump West had to discard from the queen of spades and king and ten of diamonds, dummy holding the knave of spades and ace and six of diamonds. When he discarded the ten of diamonds, dummy's knave of spades was discarded and declarer played a low diamond to West's king and dummy's ace and won the last trick with his queen of diamonds.

East should have switched to a low spade at trick two. Even if declarer rises with the king, he would have been unable to perform the squeeze. When he leads a second spade, the defence will win and lead a third spade to remove the threatening knave of spades from dummy.

Tony Forrester and David Mossop - whose team had moved into a challenging second place - bid the following hand to the four-three fit Four Spades. This was excellently judged with the more normal Three Notrumps failing.

		Dealer South	North-South		Vulnerable	
		♠ K72				
		♥ A932				
		♦ J				
		♣ J10964				
West		East	South	The Bidding		
				West	North	East
	♠ 10963		♠ 85	pass	1♥	pass
	♥ KQJ106		♥ 87	pass	2♠	pass
	♦ Q3		♦ K10872	pass	pass	pass
	♣ 32		♣ Q875			
		South				
		♠ AQJ4				
		♥ 54				
		♦ A9654				
		♣ AK				

West's king of hearts lead was ducked and the heart continuation was won by dummy's ace. Declarer, Forrester, led the knave of diamonds to the ace and ruffed a diamond. He returned to the king of clubs and carefully cashed the ace of clubs before leading a third diamond. West ruffed with the nine of trumps - he would have discarded his second club if declarer had failed to cash the ace of clubs first - and declarer overruffed with dummy's king and led a third heart. East ruffed with the five of trumps and, though forced to overruff with the knave, declarer was in control. He led a fourth diamond and West ruffed with the ten to lead another trump. Declarer won his queen, cashed the ace drawing West's last trump, made the four of trumps and conceded the fifth diamond - ten tricks.

Not one single partnership managed to reach slam on our final hand. Can you construct a sensible auction to Six Clubs?

		Dealer South	North-South	Vulnerable		
		North				
		♠ J9753				
		♥ Q5				
		♦ A52				
West	♣ J83	East	South	The Bidding		
♠ A1064		♠ KQ82	1♣	West	North	East
♥ J932		♥ 106	2♥	pass	1♠	pass
♦ Q976		♦ K1084	3♥	pass	3♣	pass
♣ 4		♣ 1092	pass	pass	5♣	pass
		South				
		♠ -				
		♥ AK874				
		♦ J3				
		♣ AKQ765				

South must have been tempted to punt Six Clubs after his partner had jumped to Five Clubs over Three Hearts in the above auction, but he doubtless feared the lack of a diamond control. But if North had found the master bid of Four Diamonds instead - showing his diamond control - South would have been able to bid Six Clubs confidently. How should Six Clubs be played?

West leads the six of diamonds and declarer's best line is to win dummy's ace, cash two top trumps preserving dummy's knave and noting West discarding on the second round; then lead a heart to dummy's queen, a heart back to his king, and trump a third heart with dummy's knave of clubs. He ruffs a spade, draws East's last trump, cashes the ace of hearts - dropping West's knave- and the established eight of hearts. Twelve reasonably easy tricks.

Despite losing their last match heavily, the All Stars managed to cling on to their lead to win the 1998 Lederer.