

Column 340 By Andrew Robson

London's Lederer Memorial Trophy is held at the perfect time of the year for bridge – a grey early November weekend. But in 2002, as in every year, the card-play was far from grey. Witness our first declarer.

		Dealer North	Both Vulnerable				
North ♠ 84 ♥ AQ8 ♦ AQ104 ♣ AQ65				The Bidding			
West		East	South	West	North	East	
♠ 102		♠ AQJ73		pass	1♦	1♠	
♥ K1076		♥ J4	double(1)	pass	2♠(2)	pass	
♦ J76		♦ 98	3♦	pass	3♥	pass	
♣ J982		♣ K1043	3NT	pass	pass	pass	
South ♠ K965 ♥ 9532 ♦ K532 ♣ 7							
							(1) Negative, showing hearts.
							(2) Showing a game-going hand with no clear direction.

West led the ten of spades, in response to his partner's overcall of the suit, and after East followed low, declarer had to decide whether to win the first trick. To facilitate a possible exit manoeuvre in spades (for an endplay on East), he elected to win the king immediately. With seven top tricks (assuming four diamonds), he needed one of the heart and club finesses to succeed. That would bring his trick total to eight. But given that the other of those two finesses rated to fail in the light of East's vulnerable overcall, the ninth would need to come from an endplay.

At trick two he elected to finesse dummy's queen of hearts (it really was a pure guess between the heart and club finesses). Success! He then cashed the ace of diamonds, crossed to the king (prepared to take a marked finesse against West's jack if East discarded on the second round) and returned to dummy's queen-ten of the suit. East discarded two clubs on the third and fourth diamonds and declarer paused to gauge the position.

East was marked with five spades and two diamonds. Assuming he held the king of clubs, he had either smoothly bared it (in which case declarer had to cash dummy's ace of the suit at this point); or he started with four (five) clubs and two (one) heart. Most defenders are loath to unguard a king without twisting and turning a little in the seat, so declarer wisely played East to have the latter distribution. He therefore made the key play of cashing dummy's ace of hearts (removing East's safe exit card in the suit), before leading a second spade. East won the spade, cashed three further cards in the suit, but, at trick 12, was forced to lead from his king of clubs around to dummy's ace-queen. Nine tricks and contract made.

Our second deal, also from the 2002 Lederer, saw Six Hearts succeed on a five-two fit, where Five Spades had failed in the other room on a five-three fit.

		Dealer East	North-South Vulnerable				
North ♠ 109643 ♥ QJ ♦ 6 ♣ Q8642				The Bidding			
West		East	South	West	North	East	
♠ A2		♠ K75		pass	3♠	3♦	
♥ 85432		♥ 7	double	pass	5♥(1)	pass	
♦ Q94		♦ KJ107532	4♥	pass	pass	pass	
♣ J75		♣ 93	6♥	pass	pass	pass	
South ♠ QJ8 ♥ AK1096 ♦ A8 ♣ AK10							
							(1) Very optimistic but South has bid very strongly and North has some useful features – a singleton diamond, two trump honours and two establishable five-card suits.

West would have defeated the contract immediately (by two tricks including a third-round ruff) had he led the ace of spades. But he could hardly envision his partner with the king of the suit, so instead led the four of diamonds. Disaster!

Declarer won the ace, ruffed his second diamond, cashed the queen of trumps, crossed to the ace of clubs, cashed his four remaining trumps discarding spades from dummy, then led the king of clubs and crossed to dummy's queen-eight-six of the suit. He merely gave up the last (spade) trick. Slam made.

Meanwhile the Five Spade contract, declared by North, received the ominous-looking opening lead of East's singleton heart. Declarer won and led a trump, but West won the ace and led a second heart. East ruffed with his low trump and also scored the king to defeat the contract by one trick.

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On both this week's deals – from the 2002 Lederer Memorial Trophy – undisciplined bidding was rewarded. Our first sees South intend his Three Heart bid as competitive (i.e. non-invitational to game). But North was not on the same wavelength and gave the matter not a second's thought before raising to game.

		Dealer North		Neither Vulnerable		
		North				
		♠ AQ32				
		♥ AK2				
		♦ 1053				
		♣ 753				
West		East	South	The Bidding		East
♠ 109764		♠ J		West	North	East
♥ J5		♥ 103	3♥	pass	1NT	3♣
♦ AKJ5		♦ 974	pass	pass	4♥	pass
♣ Q2		♣ AKJ10964				
		South				
		♠ K85				
		♥ Q98764				
		♦ Q82				
		♣ 8				

West cashed the ace of diamonds at trick one, then, in response to his partner's discouraging signal of the four, switched correctly to the queen of clubs. East overtook this with the king and the defence was poised to take two further tricks (assuming a second diamond lead from East). But at this point things went astray, East falling for the temptation to try a second top club.

Declarer ruffed the club but still appeared to be a trick short (with spades not splitting evenly. However West was in trouble on the run of the trumps. As declarer led his last trump, West was forced to discard from king-knave of diamonds and four spades. Dummy, following West's discard, held two diamonds and four spades. If West discarded the knave of diamonds, declarer would simply give up a trick to the king and so establish a third round winner in the suit. But when West discarded a spade, declarer was able to throw a diamond from dummy and score four spade tricks. Ten tricks and game made, leaving East to rue his failure to lead a second diamond.

The contract reached on our second hand was pretty appalling. But, after an unfortunate opening lead, it could not be defeated.

		Dealer North		Neither Vulnerable		
		North				
		♠ KQ				
		♥ K1087				
		♦ AQJ87				
		♣ Q4				
West		East	South	The Bidding		East
♠ J96		♠ 532		West	North	East
♥ A52		♥ QJ943	1♠	pass	1♦	1♥
♦ K9		♦ 6432	pass	2♦(1)	3NT	pass
♣ K10865		♣ A	4♣	double	pass	pass
		South		double	4♠	pass
		♠ A10874		pass		
		♥ 6				
		♦ 105				
		♣ J9732				

(1) Unassuming Cue Bid, showing ten or more points and three or more cards in support of his partner's overcall.

West realised that leading the ace of hearts might set up heart winner(s) in dummy. So he tried attacking with the king of diamonds. Oh dear - though declarer would have been able to finesse against the king of diamonds himself, he did not have an easy entry to hand to take it. Furthermore, the lead created an entry for declarer's ten of diamonds. And this was to prove crucial.

Declarer won dummy's ace of diamonds, cashed the king-queen of trumps, crossed to his precious ten of diamonds, then cashed the ace of trumps. He was pleased to see both opponents follow a third time, but not too surprised given that neither opponent doubled the final contract. He then paused to piece together the opposing hands.

With West clearly holding a doubleton diamond (why else lead the king of the suit?), East was marked with three trumps, five hearts (for his overcall) and four diamonds. That only left room for one club and it had to be the ace or king; with both ace and king West would have led a top club at trick one. As to which opponent held the ace of hearts, it rated to be West because of his reluctance to lead the suit.

Declarer smiled – it was going to be his day. He simply led his singleton heart and all the defence could do was take their ace and score the ace of clubs. They could not even untangle their three top winners to score the king of clubs. Declarer ended up scoring five trumps, five diamonds and the promoted king of hearts. 11 tricks and a most fortuitous game made with an overtrick.