

2ND EDITION REVISED & EXPANDED

THE EXTRA
EDGE IN PLAY
at bridge

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Introduction

Bobby Fischer, the reclusive chess champion, once said: ‘You have found a good move — fine — now look for a better one.’ The same advice applies in bridge. If you settle for second best, you will not achieve your full potential. Through a series of problems that we believe are both fresh and a genuine test of skill, we want to offer you the chance to become accustomed to looking for that extra edge. Whether or not you find the best answers first time round, you will surely develop new ways of thinking to strengthen your game.

Among the techniques you will encounter are: how to make the most of your chances in a single suit; how to force opponents to lead a key suit for you; how to read the cards in the light of the bidding; how to achieve the right timing; how to deceive your opponents about your actual holding.

As this is a book about card play, we have generally kept the bidding simple — using the type of methods you might meet at the rubber bridge table in London. On those occasions when only someone used to a certain system or style (five-card majors and a strong notrump, for example) might feel at home with the bidding, we have included an explanation.

Problem number one is fairly easy and number seventy-six rather tricky, but the others appear in random order. After all, when you are playing at the table there is nobody to warn you that a particular deal is more difficult than it looks, is there?

Terence Reese 1994
Julian Pottage 2005

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Slow but Fairly Sure

♠ 2
 ♥ 10 8
 ♦ A 5 3
 ♣ K Q J 9 7 5 2

♦ 9 led



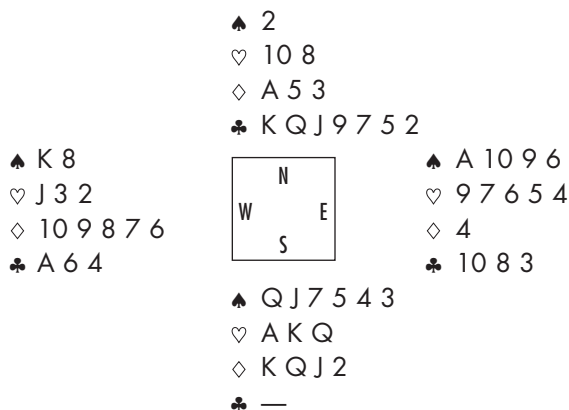
♠ Q J 7 5 4 3
 ♥ A K Q
 ♦ K Q J 2
 ♣ —

Dealer North
 Both vul.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1 ♣	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♣	pass	2 ♦
pass	3 ♣	pass	3NT
all pass			

Your 2♦, being a change of suit rebid, created a one-round force, and the final contract seems reasonable.

Since there are insufficient entries to establish and run the club suit, you will need to play on the spades. How will you do this after winning the diamond lead in one hand or the other?



You are in 3NT and West has led the nine of diamonds. (Many players treat the ten as a ‘strong’ lead.)

You can afford to lose three spades, so no problem arises if the suit breaks 3-3. You must concentrate on the 4-2 divisions.

The most critical situation is where West has a doubleton, as in the diagram. It would be a mistake, as you see, to take the first trick in dummy and lead low to the jack and king; that way you would lose four spade tricks. It works better to play low from your hand on both the first and second round.

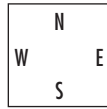
Since you intend to duck in both hands, it should make no difference whether you begin with the two of spades from dummy or the three from your hand. We admit that if East held something like A-K-10-8 you would do better to lead from dummy and win with the queen or jack. However, you intend to play small from hand: if East has four spades, he is more likely to hold A-10-x-x or K-10-x-x than precisely A-K-10-x.

There are some other interesting plays of this kind. With a small singleton opposite your A-J-10-x-x-x, for example, the best play for four tricks is the ace (or ideally up to the ace) followed by a low card. This succeeds against K-x or Q-x on either side, a better chance than finding K-Q-x-x on your right.

No Genius

♠ 9 7 6 4
 ♥ Q
 ♦ A J 10 6
 ♣ A K 8 3

♦ K led



♠ A K J 10 8
 ♥ A J 5
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ J 6 5

Dealer South
N-S vul.

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♣	pass	1♠
pass	5♥	pass	4♥
all pass			6♠

North's 4♣ was a conventional bid (from the days before splinters) indicating spade support, an unspecified singleton and two aces. With his moderate spades, it might have been wiser to begin with 2♣ or 2♦. Since he had already shown two aces, the bid of five hearts suggested a singleton heart.

The king of diamonds lead means there will be a discard for the losing club, but how will you tackle the trump suit?

<p>♠ Q 3 ♥ K 9 6 2 ♦ K Q 8 7 3 ♣ 9 4</p>	<p>♠ 9 7 6 4 ♥ Q ♦ A J 10 6 ♣ A K 8 3</p> <table border="1" style="margin: 0 auto; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ 5 2 ♥ 10 8 7 4 3 ♦ 5 4 ♣ Q 10 7 2</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	<p>♠ A K J 10 8 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 9 2 ♣ J 6 5</p>										

You play in 6♠ and West leads the diamond king. You will not have to worry about the third club now, but you may well have to take a view in the trump suit.

A 3-1 break occurs more often than a 2-2 break, but if you cash the ace, the singleton queen might fall. This means that if the queen does not drop on the first round then the odds are almost even on whether she will do so on the second.

Since West appears more likely than East to hold length in diamonds, you could reasonably play East for three spades to the queen, but on such occasions there is sometimes a way to entrap a non-expert defender. Take the first diamond and play one straight back. Then win a club return in dummy and lead the master jack of diamonds. At this point, many players in the East position would ruff with a confident air, solving all your problems.

Of course, it wouldn't be good play for East to ruff: he should ask himself why declarer has not played on trumps at once. If East nonchalantly discards, declarer will surely feel inclined to place him with an original Q-x-x. So really it comes down to a question of how South estimates his opponent.