

ON THE OTHER HAND

David Bird
&
Larry Cohen

The image shows two hands, one on the left and one on the right, gripping dark, weathered wooden posts. The background is a bright blue sky with wispy white clouds. A semi-transparent grey rectangular box is centered over the sky, containing the text 'BRIDGE CARDPLAY EXPLAINED'.

BRIDGE
CARDPLAY
EXPLAINED

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CONTENTS

Introduction	4
1. Should you draw trumps or not?	5
2. Should you finesse or not?	23
3. Should you hold up or not?	47
4. Can you discard a loser?	63
5. Safe or dangerous?	85
6. How should you manage the entries?	101
7. Can you combine your chances?	123
8. Can you take or avoid a ruff?	143
9. How should you play this suit?	165
10. Can you read the cards?	191
11. Can you arrange an endplay?	209

Introduction

Will you find anything new in this book? Yes, you will. It contains 100 pairs of deals. The deals in a matching pair are presented on facing pages. Although the two layouts may look very similar, different techniques are required for each deal. The recommended lines of play are followed by a short ‘Understand Why’ synopsis.

Do not move to the next deal until you are happy that you have completely understood why you needed to play in the way that one of us explained. Only then will you be able to tackle with confidence any similar contract that arises at the table.

The deals are arranged in 11 chapters, according to the area of cardplay involved. At the end of each chapter, you will find a list of ‘Points to Remember’.

This is the first time that we have written together and we had a great time, flashing emails across the Atlantic at all times of the day and night. If you enjoy reading the book, and perhaps feel good about making a few more contracts thereafter, everyone will be happy!

David and Larry

We are very much indebted to several friends of ours, who kindly offered to check the contents of this book. Many thanks indeed to Simon Cochemé and Dominic Connolly from the UK, and to Patty Becker, Helen Nathan, and Alan Templeton from the USA. Their assistance stretched way beyond the realm of proof-checking, and we were glad to accept many suggestions for improvement of the text.



**Should You Draw
Trumps or Not?**

1A

David's deal

	♠ 5 3											
	♥ A Q J 5											
	♦ 9 7 5 2											
	♣ 10 5 2											
♠ 7	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 8 4 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ K 10 6 4		♥ 9 8 2										
♦ K Q 8 4		♦ A 3										
♣ K Q 9 8		♣ 7 6 4 3										
	♠ A K Q J 10 6											
	♥ 7 3											
	♦ J 10 6											
	♣ A J											

West	North	East	South
			1♠
dbl	1NT	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

How will you play 4♠ when West leads the ♣K to your ♣A?

You can see three losers in diamonds, one in clubs and a possible loser in hearts. If West held the ♦AK, he would have led a diamond, so East holds the ace or king of diamonds. This makes West a near certainty to hold the ♥K. Finesse twice in hearts, and you will have a discard for one of your minor-suit losers.

Should you draw trumps and then finesse the ♥Q? The finesse would win but there would then be no entry to repeat the heart finesse. You should play the ♠A, but next you must finesse the ♥Q. When it wins, you return to the ♠K and draw trumps. You finesse the ♥J and discard a loser on the ♥A.

If instead, you play the ♣J at an early stage, West will win with the ♣Q and see the need for a low diamond switch.

UNDERSTAND WHY

You cannot draw trumps first, because you will then be able to take only one heart finesse. You will lose four tricks in the minors. To allow a second heart finesse, you must leave a trump entry to the South hand.

1B

Larry's deal

	♠ 5 3											
	♥ A Q J 5											
	♦ Q 10 7 5											
	♣ 10 5 2											
♠ 7 ♥ 10 6 4 ♦ K 8 4 2 ♣ K Q 9 8 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 8 4 2 ♥ K 9 8 2 ♦ A 3 ♣ 7 6 4	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ A K Q J 10 6											
	♥ 7 3											
	♦ J 9 6											
	♣ A J											

West	North	East	South
			1♠
pass	1NT	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

Yes, that's a good example of taking a close look at the entry position when you make your initial plan. I can imagine one of my pupils remembering the lesson on checking the entries and going wrong on this deal. He wins the ♣K lead, plays the ♠A and finesses the ♥Q. The finesse loses, as was always possible when West had not entered the auction. The defenders then score three winners in the minors and a diamond ruff. Not the best, that's down two!

This is a typical deal where you should see whether you'll have enough tricks if you draw trump first. Here you can draw trump and play the ♣J, setting up dummy's ♣10. This will give you six trumps, one heart, two clubs and an eventual diamond trick. (You will discard the heart loser on the ♣10.)

UNDERSTAND WHY

Finessing in hearts is a needless risk. Win the club lead and draw trump. You then play the ♣J, setting up the ♣10 for a discard of your potential heart loser. You will lose just one club and two diamonds.

2A

Larry's deal

	♠ A K Q 10 9 4											
	♥ A 6 4											
	♦ J 9 8											
	♣ 3											
♠ 8 3 2 ♥ 10 ♦ 10 7 6 2 ♣ K 10 9 8 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5 ♥ Q J 9 5 ♦ K 5 4 3 ♣ Q 6 5 4	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ J 7 6											
	♥ K 8 7 3 2											
	♦ A Q											
	♣ A J 7											

West	North	East	South
			1NT
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4NT	pass	5♥
pass	6♠	all pass	

North starts with a transfer response to show his spades and rebids 4♣. This shows club shortness and suggests a spade slam. South is happy with this idea and shows his control in diamonds. North then uses Roman Keycard Blackwood and 6♠ is reached. How should you play the slam when the ♥10 is led?

You have a certain loser on the third round of hearts. If the hearts split 3-2, you will be able to set up two discards for dummy's diamond losers. You win the heart lead with the ace, draw trump in three rounds and play the ♥K. The 4-1 break means that you can set up only one long heart and will need a diamond finesse to win.

You concede a heart to East, win the club return with the ace and ruff a fourth round of hearts in dummy. Finally, you take a winning finesse of the ♦Q and discard dummy's remaining diamond on the established long heart.

UNDERSTAND WHY

You draw trump and test the hearts. A 3-2 break would give you two diamond discards from dummy; you would not need to risk a diamond finesse. When hearts are 4-1, you can set up only one diamond discard and will need to finesse the ♦Q.

2B

David's deal

	♠ J 10 9 5 4 3											
	♥ A 6 4											
	♦ J 9 8											
	♣ 3											
♠ A 8 ♥ Q J 10 9 ♦ K 7 6 2 ♣ K 10 8	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 2 ♥ 5 3 2 ♦ 10 5 4 3 ♣ A J 5 4 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ K Q 7 6											
	♥ K 8 7											
	♦ A Q											
	♣ Q 9 7 6											

West	North	East	South
pass	2♥	pass	1NT
pass	3♠	pass	2♠
all pass			4♠

Just occasionally, you will have to play Larry's diamond combination differently. How would you play 4♠ here when West leads the ♥Q?

Suppose you play trumps at trick two. When West wins with the ♠A he will play another heart, setting up a heart trick for the defenders. With a certain loser in spades, hearts and clubs, you will need the diamond finesse to win. It fails and you go one down.

You should win the heart lead with the king, preserving the ♥A as an entry to dummy. You continue with the ace and queen of diamonds, spurning a finesse in the suit. You don't care which defender has the ♦K. You win the next heart with the ace and discard your heart loser on dummy's ♦J. Only then will you start to draw trumps. Ten tricks will be yours.

UNDERSTAND WHY

If you win with the ♥A and finesse the ♦Q, West will win with the ♦K and clear a heart trick. The diamond suit will be blocked, leaving you with no entry to take a discard on the ♦J. To avoid this situation, you must play the ace and queen of diamonds.

3A

David's deal

	♠ K J 4											
	♥ K 7 4 3 2											
	♦ 5 4 2											
	♣ 10 4											
♠ 8 7 6	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center; width: 40px; height: 40px;"> <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> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ 5	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 10 6		♥ Q J 9 8										
♦ A 9 8 7 3		♦ J 10										
♣ J 8 5		♣ A K Q 9 6 2										
	♠ A Q 10 9 3 2											
	♥ A 5											
	♦ K Q 6											
	♣ 7 3											

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♠
pass	2♠	3♣	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♣5 and East scores two tricks in the suit. When he switches to the ♦J, You try the king and are disappointed to find the ace offside. West continues with a diamond and you now face two losers in each minor suit. How can you rescue the contract?

You can afford to play the ♠A but must then turn to the heart suit. (If hearts break 4-2, you will need the ♠K and ♠J as entries.)

You play the ace and king of hearts and ruff a heart with the ♠9 to avoid an overruff. West shows out of hearts, and you return to dummy with the ♠J to ruff the fourth round of hearts with the ♠10. Finally you cross to the ♠K, drawing West's last trump, and discard the ♦6 on the established ♥7.

UNDERSTAND WHY

In general, there are many reasons why it may not be a good idea to draw trumps immediately. Here it's because you will need the entries that the trump suit provides. By preserving the ♠K and ♠J, you can establish and reach the ♥7 for a diamond discard.

3B

Larry's deal

	♠ K J 4											
	♥ K 7 4 3 2											
	♦ 5 4 2											
	♣ 10 4											
♠ 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 5	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ J 10 9 8 6		♥ Q										
♦ 10 9 8 3		♦ A J 7										
♣ A J 5		♣ K Q 9 8 6 2										
	♠ A Q 10 9 3 2											
	♥ A 5											
	♦ K Q 6											
	♣ 7 3											

West	North	East	South
		1♣	1♠
dbl	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

That was an instructive deal, David. Many contracts are lost because declarer draws trump too early. In my variation declarer and the dummy hold exactly the same cards, but the bidding and the early play are different. This will affect your line of play.

West leads ace and another club, East winning and switching to the ♥Q. West's negative double showed a heart suit and there is every chance that the hearts will break 5-1. If you attempt to set up that suit, East may ruff the second round.

The bidding tells you something else of interest. Surely East must hold the ♦A to make up his opening bid. You should win with the ♥A, keeping the ♥K as a subsequent dummy entry. You then draw trump, ending in the dummy, and play a diamond to the king. When this wins, you return to the ♥K and lead another diamond. You score six trump tricks, two hearts and two diamonds.

UNDERSTAND WHY

On this deal, the bidding and early play mark East with the ♦A. You do not need to establish the hearts, which would involve the serious risk of an adverse ruff.

4A

Larry's deal

	♠ A K J 3											
	♥ A 8 2											
	♦ 8 5											
	♣ 6 5 4 3											
♠ 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 6 4 2	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ Q J 10 9 5		♥ K 4 3										
♦ J 9 6 4		♦ Q 10										
♣ A Q 10		♣ J 8 7 2										
	♠ Q 10 9 8											
	♥ 7 6											
	♦ A K 7 3 2											
	♣ K 9											

West	North	East	South
			1♦
1♥	dbl	2♥	2♠
pass	4♠	all pass	

West leads the ♥Q against your spade game and you can see one heart loser and a possible two further losers in clubs. If you can establish the diamond suit, you will be able to make the game.

Should you draw trump after winning with dummy's ♥A? No. You will go down even if you draw just one round of trump at the start. You should play your main side suit, diamonds, straight away. You will need dummy's trump suit for ruffing diamonds, also for returning to the South hand.

You play the ♦AK, all following, and trump a diamond with the ♠A, to prevent an overruff. When East shows out, you see that you will need to trump another diamond. You lead the ♠3 to the ♠8 and trump a diamond with the ♠K. You then lead the ♠J to the ♠Q and draw East's remaining trumps with the 10 and 9. You lose just one heart and two clubs.

UNDERSTAND WHY

Your plan is to establish the diamond suit. Drawing any trump at the start would be disastrous. You play the ♦AK and ruff two diamonds with the ♠A and ♠K. Only then do you draw trump.

4B

David's deal

	♠ A K J 3	
	♥ A 5	
	♦ 8 5	
	♣ Q J 10 8 4	
♠ 5	N	♠ 7 6 4 2
♥ Q J 10 9 8 4 3	W	♥ 6 2
♦ 4	E	♦ Q J 10 9 6
♣ A 6 5 3	S	♣ 7 2
	♠ Q 10 9 8	
	♥ K 7	
	♦ A K 7 3 2	
	♣ K 9	

West	North	East	South
			1♦
3♥	dbl	pass	4♠
pass	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

North is not quite strong enough to use Roman Keycard Blackwood after the 4♠ rebid. He wants to suggest a slam but not insist on one. His bid of 5♥ shows a heart control and leaves the final decision to his partner. How would you play 6♠ when West leads the ♥Q?

Suppose you take the same line as on Larry's deal, playing the ♦A and ♦K. A gleeful West will ruff and cash the ♣A. Painful! Why would that be the wrong way to play on this deal? There is no need to establish the diamond suit. You can discard your three diamond losers on dummy's clubs.

You should win the first trick with the ♥K, keeping the ♥A as a later entry to dummy. You then draw trumps in four rounds and lead the ♣K. It makes no difference if West holds up the ♣A. You play another club to his ♣A and subsequently discard your three diamond losers on the established clubs.

UNDERSTAND WHY

Before playing to the first trick, you should always make a plan. Here you start with one club loser and three losing diamonds. The low diamonds can be discarded on dummy's clubs, so you can afford to draw trumps immediately.

5A

Larry's deal

	♠ A K 3											
	♥ 10 8 4 2											
	♦ J 7											
	♣ J 9 8 3											
♠ J 7 6	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 9 8 5 4	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
♥ 3		♥ A 7 6										
♦ Q 10 6 4 2		♦ 9 3										
♣ K Q 10 5		♣ 7 6 2										
	♠ Q 2											
	♥ K Q J 9 5											
	♦ A K 8 5											
	♣ A 4											

West	North	East	South
pass	3♥	pass	1♥
all pass			6♥

I don't approve of the auction, but the slam is quite good. How would you seek twelve tricks when West leads the ♣K?

You win the club lead and must immediately ditch your small club. Before drawing trump, you have to risk playing three rounds of spades. They all live, and the club goes away. Your next task is to trump two diamonds in dummy. You can play one round of trump first, to the king, and this will be ducked. You cannot play a second round, since a defender may win and play a third round. Dummy's ♥8 and ♥10 are useful cards. You play two top diamonds and ruff a third round with the ♥8. Whether or not East chooses to overruff and return a trump, you will ruff your last diamond with the ♥10 and make the contract.

UNDERSTAND WHY

After winning the club lead, the first priority is to ditch the exposed club loser on dummy's spades. You can play one round of trump to the king. Then you need to trump two diamonds in dummy. The ruffs are taken with the ♥8 and ♥10, only one of which can be overruffed.

5B

David's deal

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

West	North	East	South
pass	3♥	pass	1♥
all pass			6♥

My deal is so similar to Larry's that you may have to look closely to spot the difference. You no longer have the precious ♥10 and ♥8 in dummy. Does that affect your line of play?

Er... yes! West again leads the ♣K and it will not be practical to ruff two losing diamonds before drawing trumps. One of the defenders holds fewer than four diamonds and he will score a second trump trick for his side (unless he is void in trumps or holds a singleton ♥A).

You win with the ♣A and, as on Larry's deal, must immediately play three rounds of spades to ditch the club loser. The best chance then is to play trumps, hoping for a 2-2 break. There's no law against being lucky once in a while, and this time you do get the even break that you need. With the defenders' trumps drawn, there will be no problem in ruffing the two diamond losers.

UNDERSTAND WHY

Deciding whether to draw trumps or not will often require making a plan for the contract. Here the required order of play was (a) ditch the club loser, (b) draw trumps, (c) ruff two diamonds.

6A

David's deal

	♠ J 8 7 6		
	♥ 6 5		
	♦ K Q 6		
	♣ A Q 4 3		
♠ K 2 ♥ K Q 9 3 2 ♦ 7 5 ♣ K 9 7 2	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> N W E S </div>	♠ A ♥ J 8 7 4 ♦ A 8 4 2 ♣ J 10 8 6	
	♠ Q 10 9 5 4 3		
	♥ A 10		
	♦ J 10 9 3		
	♣ 5		

West	North	East	South
pass	4♠	all pass	2♠

How do you play your weak-two openings? In North America, the preferred style is to require a reasonable hand with a respectable six-card trump suit. In Europe, players use such openings as mainly disruptive and will often hold only five cards in the suit. A bridge-writing friend of mine, Marc Smith, has been known to reprimand his partner after a failing defense with ‘How could I possibly hold five spades? I didn’t open with a weak two!’

The above deal features a respectable weak-two from South. North raises to 4♠ because (a) it might make and (b) if not, the opponents might do well in hearts. How will you play 4♠ when West leads the ♥K?

A fourth potential loser has been exposed and playing trumps will bring inevitable defeat. The only real chance is to take an immediate finesse of the ♣Q. When it wins, you discard the ♥10 on the ♣A. You will then lose just two trumps and a diamond.

UNDERSTAND WHY

One of several reasons why you may need to delay drawing trumps is a pressing need to dispose of a loser. If this is not possible immediately, you may need to set up a discard. Here you do that by taking a successful club finesse.

A NEW WAY TO LEARN BRIDGE CARDPLAY

In this unusual book, David Bird and Larry Cohen combine to present cardplay instruction in a new way. 100 pairs of deals are shown — one described by David and the other by Larry. The deals look similar (in some cases very similar) but an entirely different line of play is necessary to make each of the contracts. Only by clearly understanding the techniques involved will you be able to tackle such deals when you encounter them at the table.



DAVID BIRD has written more than 135 bridge books, a record, and is a seven-time winner of the American Bridge Teachers' Association 'Book of the Year'. His humorous stories, featuring the cantankerous Abbot and the monks of St Titus, have appeared for over forty years in *Bridge Magazine*.



LARRY COHEN had a glittering record as a player (with dozens of wins in national and international events) before switching to teaching and writing about the game. He has written award-winning books and bridge software/videos and now teaches around the USA and on many bridge cruises worldwide.