

Maritha's Teaching Points

Boston At The Bridge Table

By Maritha Pottenger

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Hands are from ACBL game on BBO, September 8, 2021.

Hand #8

North
(MarithaP)
♠K854
♥8762
♦Q8753
♣—

West
♠AJ97
♥KQ103
♦J9
♣654

East
♠Q10
♥J
♦K42
♣KQ109732

South
(Raymond S)
♠632
♥A954
♦A106
♣AJ8

All Non-Vul; Dealer West

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
p	p	3♣	P
P	P		

After two passes, East opened 3♣. Ray wisely passed with that 3-4-3-3 13 HCP hand opposite a passed partner. He led a “Top Of Nothing” [half of BOSTON] ♠6. Declarer ducked, and I won the King as East dropped the Queen.

It seems more likely that East started with a doubleton Queen (why else duck the trick with no quick entries to Dummy?) than a singleton. Since the ♠3 and ♠2 are missing, Ray's lead was top of nothing,

and Declarer started with ♠Q10. Ray must have the ♥A and either the ♦A or ♦K. **He cannot have both high diamonds or he would have led the Ace.**

If I lead diamonds and Declarer guesses to play me for the Queen, I am giving Declarer a diamond trick. However, if I do not attack diamonds and Ray has the King, our diamond trick may vanish on the hearts and spades in dummy. So, I must play diamonds before Ray's ♥A is knocked out. Furthermore, **I do NOT want to encourage Ray in diamonds in case he has the Ace and Declarer has the ♦K.**

So, **I did NOT lead a “normal” ♦5 or ♦3** (Bottom Of Something—the other half of BOSTON). I led the ♦8 to indicate that I had no help for Ray in the suit, and to encourage Ray to cash his ♥A before it goes away on spades. [If Ray wins the ♦A and returns a diamond because I showed “something” by leading low, Declarer's heart loser may disappear on the spades.] Ray got the memo, winning the ♦A and then cashing the ♥A. His fortuitious club holding meant that we beat the contract one trick. Some defenders did NOT cash out in time, and lost their heart trick.

Hand #15

North	
(MarithaP)	
♠10532	
♥—	
♦Q986	
♣AKQ72	
West	East
♠K74	♠Q98
♥Q10876	♥953
♦K10	♦J7532
♣J86	♣105
South	
(Raymond S)	
♠AJ6	
♥AKJ42	
♦A4	
♣943	

N/S Vul; Dealer South

The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
			1♥
P	1♠	P	2NT
P	3NT	P	P
P			

Ray opened 1♥ and I bid 1♠. (I don't have enough to bid a game-forcing 2♣ when partner has opened my void.) Ray jumped to 2NT and I raised to 3NT.

The lead was the ♣6. At first glance, the ♣6 looks like a 4th-best lead, but Ray looked more deeply into the position. **The only clubs above the 6 that are not visible are the ♣J, ♣10, and ♣8. If West had held the ♣J1086, the ♣J would be the more normal lead.** So, Ray suspected that West might be leading from a three card holding. Ray played the ♣A and East discarded the ♣10 (not advisable, although it did not matter in this case).

The conclusion that West has led from a 3-card holding makes it highly likely that **West's 4 card (or longer) suit is hearts**—the suit that Ray opened. We can make two more inferences from this lead: (1) **West has a very unappetizing diamond holding** from which to lead (perhaps a doubleton honor)—otherwise West might have tried that unbid suit. (2) **West probably has an honor in spades or perhaps just three spades.** If West had two small spades, a spade lead would be highly appealing as East would be known to hold at least 4 spades and to be sitting behind Dummy with the positional advantage.

Ray is pretty sure he is coming to 5 clubs tricks, so he took his best shot for an overtrick by playing a spade to the Jack. West ducked that for no apparent reason. Ray then played another high club, confirming the 3-2 division, and cashed Dummy's clubs. A spade to the Ace, followed by a low spade.

Poor West had to either lead away from the ♦K—giving Ray access to the Queen in Dummy AND the good ♠10 —or finesse East in hearts. West chose to finesse East, so Ray got 5 club tricks, 2 spades, 3 hearts, and 1 diamond.

This hand is a good example of all the inferences that are sometimes available after just the opening lead. ♣