Maritha's Teaching Points

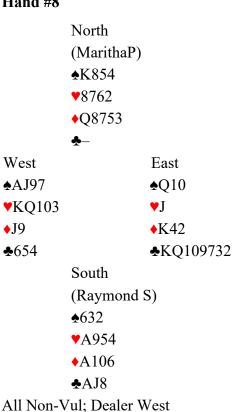
Boston At The Bridge Table

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

Hand #8



The Bidding:

West	North	East	South
p	p	3♣	P
Р	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,

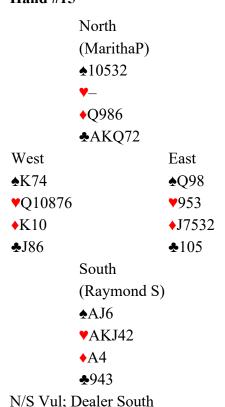


and Declarer started with ♠Q10. Ray must have the ♥A and either the ♦A or ♦K. He cannot have both high diamonds or he would have led the Ace.

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



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. ♣