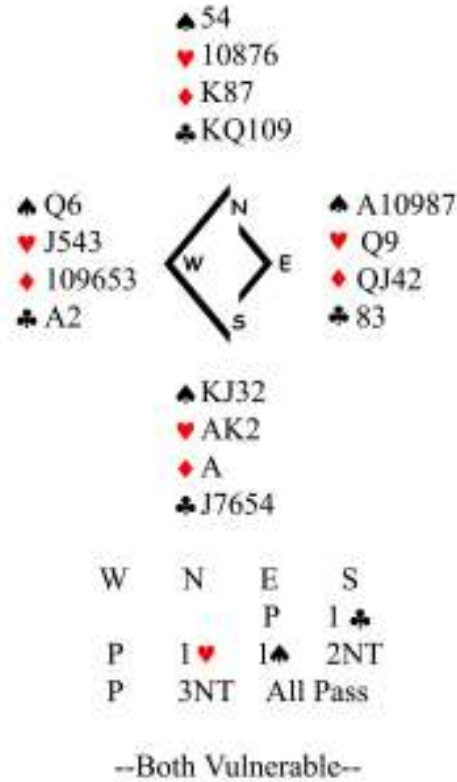


166. Favourable Placement of Points

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Local Bridge:

You may find duplicate bridge at the Warfield Hall every Monday at noon, and in Trail, at the Trail United Church, Wednesday at noon and Thursday at 7:00pm. This hand happened at the Trail Duplicate Bridge Club.

The bidding:

South, with 16 points, is not balanced and cannot open one notrump. South opens one club.

Can one open 1NT with a singleton ace? The duplicate rules say one can if it makes good bridge sense. One may argue that opening one notrump with a singleton ace is not good bridge sense because the hand is more valuable in a trump suit. I think one notrump should not be opened with a singleton ace. It was not.

North replies one heart with six plus points, and East makes a vulnerable overcall of one spade. Ideally, East's spades should be a little better, but getting into the auction with spades muddies the waters.

However, here, it did not have the desired effect. South can re-evaluate her hand to 18 points and jump to two notrump because of the two clear spade stoppers. The king swallows the queen and the two points with it, so the king and jack are effectively six points. North places the contract in three notrump.

Swallowing Points:

This is a phrase I coined. The idea is not new, just the wording. Higher honours become as valuable as the honours they take. For example, if a queen is doubleton, whoever has the ace and king have an effective nine points, not the seven points one expects.

The Lead: Queen of Spades

My partner made a vulnerable overcall so I felt obliged to lead the queen, top of a doubleton in partner's suit. I should have led a diamond, and declarer never makes her contract.

One has second thoughts about leading partner's suit against three notrump when they hold a singleton, a doubleton queen or an ace third (Axx). The sequence in diamonds is only two cards so the best lead would have been a small diamond.

The play:

Declarer, with the queen of spades led, has two spade stoppers and enough time to kick out the ace of clubs. With a diamond lead, she now needs transportation to lead spades twice towards her hand and transportation to cash the king of diamonds. Singleton aces are a hindrance to three notrump.

Declarer gets two spades, two hearts, two diamonds and four clubs for ten tricks. On a diamond lead, she will lose to the queen and ace of spades and diamonds will set up for the defense before she can set up her winners. She will lose two spades, no hearts, three diamonds and one club for down two.

Result:

3NT+1 for +630 (Queen of spades led) or 3NT-2 for -200 on a diamond lead.

Note:

-All the bridge columns may be viewed at <http://watsongallery.ca>.