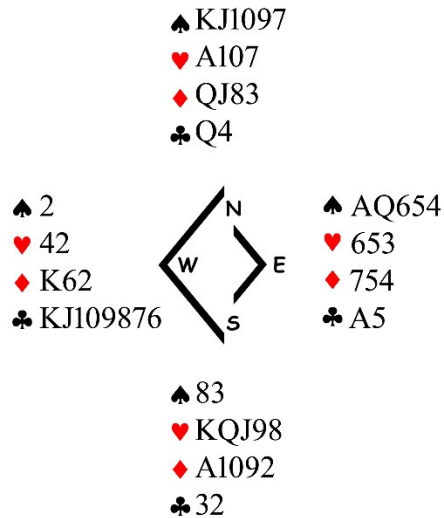


238. Balancing Action Over A Weak Three

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N	E	S	W
			3 ♣
P	P	3 ♥	All Pass

--North South Vulnerable--

The bidding:

West has a seven-loser hand and is down 500 if doubled at the three-level. The opponents can get +620 for a vulnerable game so Three Clubs is a good pre-empt.

West puts out the stop sign and then bids Three Clubs. He counts to ten silently and then puts the stop card away. Until the stop card is removed, all the players must appear in thought. How fast someone bids should not convey information to the other players. When the stop card is removed, North can immediately make the bid he had been thinking about.

North has a scattered 13 points and refrains from a disastrous Three Spade call. East has a special bid reserved in case North does not pass. North passes and East also passes in tempo so South has no unauthorized information. South balances with a Three-Heart bid because he has the right shape and about ten points. North devalues the Club Queen and passes.

The Play:

East leads his stiff spade. Whenever a player pre-empts and does not lead his own suit, he is showing a singleton. East wins the Spade Queen and exits a small club. West wins the King and returns a club to East's Ace. Now East cashes the Spade Ace and tries to give West a ruff, but declarer ruffs with the Eight and West cannot over-ruff.

However, because of the ruff, declarer only gets two pitches on the Spades and must lose a diamond. If the defense did not take their club tricks, declarer would lose two Spades and a Diamond making Four Hearts. With the correct defense, Three Hearts is down one for -100.

With a different 13 points, North could have raised the balancing bid to game. Such an appropriate hand would have no points in the opponent's suit and more points in Aces and Kings and not Queens and Jacks. If he had the Ace and King of Spades, the Ace of Hearts and the King of Diamonds, North would have raised the Three Heart bid to game. This shows how bidding is not simply a matter of just counting points, but it is also a matter of point evaluation.

Final Pre-empt Note:

Andersen and Zenkel in their book, "Pre-empts from A to Z," state that the accuracy of opponent's bidding varies inversely as the square of the level of the pre-empt. Therefore, one always must pre-empt to the highest level as it is safe to do so which means that pre-empts should be ultimately based on the loser-count and not just the suit length.

