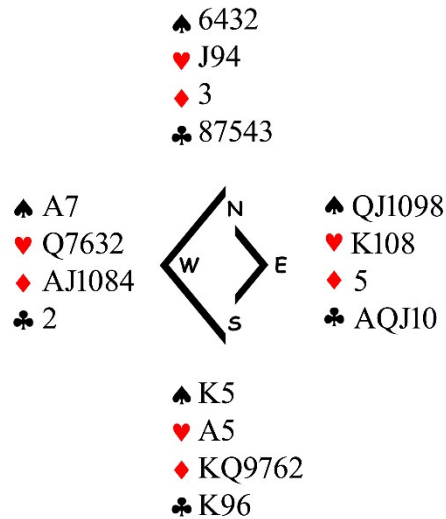


283. Trap Passing

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E	S	W	N
1 ♠	2 ♦	P	P
Dbl	All Pass		

--North South Vulnerable--

Another tip made by Kit Woolsey in his book, "Matchpoints," was regarding trap passing. When one's partner opens the bidding and his LHO overcalls a suit one wants to double for penalty, what does one do?

If one doubles, partner will see the double as a negative double asking him to choose an unbid suit. So how does one penalize the opponent for a dubious overcall? One passes and hopes partner, looking at shortness in opponent's suit, reopens with a double which will be passed converting partner's takeout double to a penalty double.

Woolsey states that if your partner passes LHO's overcall, reopen with a double with two or fewer cards in the suit and with three or more cards in the suit, one must realize that partner just has nothing to say.

If one reopens with a double, one must be prepared for a response in one's second shortest suit, assuming the overcalled suit is the shortest.

The Bidding:

East opens One Spade, and South overcalls Two Diamonds. It is not a bad overcall except the suit should be a little better but in view of the extra strength, South makes the overcall. West trap passes because he certainly does not want to make a negative double and have partner bid. East doubles for takeout because he is short in Diamonds and West passes.

Opening Lead:

It is the mark of a good player to not automatically cash an Ace just because partner opened the suit. Instead of a Spade, West leads his stiff Club.

The play:

East wins the Club Ace and puts the Club Queen on the table. South covers, and it gets ruffed. West exits a small Heart and East plays the 10 when dummy ducks, and declarer takes his Ace. With a heavy heart, South plays the Diamond Queen. Would South overcall on Queen empty and partner have the King surmises West. He ducks, declarer wins and leads a small Diamond.

West wins the Ten and plays another Heart. East wins the King, cashes a Club and plays the Spade Queen. South has no choice but to cover and hope East is trying to fool him, but West wins the Ace and exits a Spade.

When the dust clears, South is down three for -800. This example, I hope, demonstrates the importance of suit quality over hand strength for a two-level overcall.