

# Better Bridge

By ROBERT D.  
ROSENBLUM  
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Contract bridge has assumed several variant forms since its incubation in the late 1920s. Millions of people play rubber bridge at social get-togethers ("Party bridge") with perhaps small stakes hinging on the outcome. Still others play for large amounts, some striving for their livelihood in this way.

The theory behind rubber bridge is simple — as declarer, make the contract; as defenders, beat it.

Match-point pairs, the backbone of tournament bridge, is another matter. Here, where the hands are duplicated and replayed as many as a dozen times, the object is to outscore not the opponents of the moment, but rather all other pairs who will hold the same hands you do. Rubber bridge players find it strange that in duplicate bridge a pair usually doesn't play against its true rivals.

The match-point declarer on occasion will jeopardize a makeable contract to play for an overtrick (anathema to a rubber bridge player). Similarly, a defender may surrender all hope of beating a hand for fear of allowing an overtrick. Since you earn a point for each pair you top and only one-half point for each tie it is imperative to make the most of every hand.

Today's hand illustrates the different approach of each school.

The duplicate declarer may wonder why he didn't reach six spades. He will win the first trick with dummy's queen of diamonds and lead a low spade. If East produces

the nine or queen South will cover. If trumps are 2-1 and West's ace of spades is spent on the initial trump lead declarer can virtually claim six. It is an easy matter to set up the dummy hand with no other loser. If diamonds do break badly, a trump finesse for West's club ace will establish two discards for declarer's queen and jack.

When the hand was played South embarked on this course. East showed out on the first trump lead, West won and shifted to a low heart taken by dummy's ace. When West got in with another trump a heart continuation to East's queen enabled West to ruff a diamond return for the setting trick. East-West won three trumps and a heart.

South was not tempted by an alternative line which would have failed also. Superficial analysis suggests winning the first trick in hand and leading the club king. West will cover the first or second high club lead and dummy will ruff. Since declarer has no immediate re-entry he is unable to discard dummy's losing hearts.

Was declarer greedy? Only a rubber bridge player would think so.

Instead of racing hungrily after two overtricks the methodical — plodding, perhaps? — rubber enthusiast seeks to secure his contract before looking beyond. His solution is simple — win the ace of diamonds and fire back a diamond. West may ruff but he will never get a heart trick. The losing heart goes on dummy's diamond queen while West trumps again. This declarer racks up a plus score as only three spades are lost.

North  
S J 8 7 6 3  
H A 5 4  
D K Q 9 7 2  
C —

West	East
S A Q 9	S —
H J 7 3	H K Q 10 9 2
D 5	D J 10 8 4 3
C A 10 9 8 7 3	C 6 5 2

South  
S K 10 5 4 2  
H 8 6  
D A 6  
C K Q J 4

South was the dealer. Neither side vulnerable.

South	West	North	East
1S	2C	2D	2H
2S	Pass	3C	Pass
3D	Pass	3H	Pass
3NT	Pass	4S	Pass
Pass	Pass		

West led the five of diamonds.

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