

Setting Up the Opponents for the Kill

I played with Gail Greenberg in June 2006 in the Mixed Pairs at the World Championships in Verona Italy. There were three qualifying sessions and three final sessions. We qualified easily, and when our opponents were Lew and JoAnna Stansby in the first of the final sessions, I held this hand:

♠A752 ♥A ♦A107542 ♣104

Nobody was vulnerable and after two passes JoAnna opened 1♣. I overcalled 1♦, Lew bid 1♠, and Gail raised to 2♦, showing a "junky raise". With a constructive raise or better, she would have cue bid 2♣. JoAnna now bid 2♥, and it was my turn to bid. What would you do?

Nobody Vulnerable			
<u>LHO</u>	<u>Partner</u>	<u>RHO</u>	<u>You</u>
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♦
1♠	2♦	2♥	?

You have a surprisingly large amount of information about the distribution of the hand. Since you frequently overcall 4-card suits at the 1-level, partner probably has 4-card support. Furthermore, you play snapdragon. If partner held a good 5-card heart suit with 4 diamonds, partner probably would have doubled showing the heart suit and at least a diamond tolerance. Instead partner denied holding 5 decent hearts with the raise to 2♦.

So, you calculate that RHO probably has 4 hearts (possibly 5 hearts and 6+ clubs), and partner probably has 4 hearts, and LHO probably has 4 hearts. LHO may not have very good hearts, since with 4 good hearts he might have started with a negative double instead of showing what must be 5 spades (more than 5 is unlikely without an original weak 2 bid).

You look at your defensive potential, and see 3 likely tricks. You know that an opponent might be void in diamonds, so you might only have 2 tricks. But you will normally be able to win 3 tricks. Between your 3 likely tricks, a 4-1 heart break, and some strength in partner's hand, you think you will be able to defeat a possible 4♥ contract if the opponent's bid it.

You expect to be much happier defending a 4♥ contract than you would be playing in 4♦. While you think you might be able to make 3♦, you doubt that you would be able to make 4♦. If you bid 3♦ now and later compete to 4♦ over 3♥, you may be taking a good sacrifice against their part score, but

you will not get a great score going minus on this hand. Doubling 4♥ and hopefully beating it by one or two tricks would certainly give you a good score. What can you do to push the opponent's to a 4♥ contract?

What would happen if you jump to 4♦? That is what I did. I felt certain that my LHO would bid 4♥ over my jump. After all, he likely held 4-card support for his partner, and would be obliged to show that support to his partner (who could have a very strong hand). (In fact I think her actual 2♥ bid was an overbid). While my 4♦ bid would invite partner to sacrifice in 5♦ over the opponents 4H bid, I knew that my partner would pass -- she would not sacrifice with 4 hearts in her hand. Furthermore, by jumping to 4♦, I would not have to play in 4♦, which might go down. Clearly it is best to jump and make the opponents show their fit at the 4-level, and not at a lower level, where they might reasonably then decide to defend our contract.

And it happened just like that. I got to double 4Hearts.

LHO	Partner	RHO	You
Pass	Pass	1♣	1♦
1♠	2♦	2♥	4♦
4♥ Pass	Pass Pass	Pass Pass	Double

Now, what would you lead on opening lead?

In order to help promote partner's trumps, I wanted to set up our diamond suit. My plan was to win the diamond ace and lead another diamond, establishing our diamond suit and eliminating all the diamonds in dummy and declarer's hand. Then, when I win the trump ace, I expected to lead another diamond to make either dummy or declarer trump. And later, when I win the spade ace I can lead another diamond. Hopefully by leading all these diamonds, I would be able to promote partner's 4th trump into a trick.

In actual fact, declarer expected me to have good trumps for my penalty double, and completely misguessed the hand.

This was the entire hand:

Nobody Vulnerable	Dummy(Lew)	Pass	Pass	1♣	1♦
	♠K9843	1♠	2♦	2♥	4♦
	♥J983	4♥	Pass	Pass	Double.
	♦6				
You (Jeff)	♣Q85	Partner (Gail)			
♠A752		♠Q106			
♥A		♥K1075			
♦A107542		♦J983			
♣104	RHO (Joanna)	♣J6			
	♠J				
	♥Q642				
	♦KQ				
	♣AK9732				

At trick 2, dummy discarded a spade while Gail's ♦J lost to declarer's ♦K. Declarer, apparently expecting me to have long hearts, crossed the the ♣Q at trick 3, and led a heart to her queen and my ace. I then cashed the ace of spades (so declarer couldn't discard the spade jack and trump in dummy) and then continued with diamonds. Partner ended up winning 3 trump tricks and we scored 500 points on the hand for 95% of the matchpoints.

It is interesting to speculate what would have happened if I hadn't cashed the spade ace. Perhaps declarer would have trumped in dummy in order to discard her spade loser (hoping for a favorable heart situation), played a club to her hand, and then led a heart planning on finessing. If that would have happened, partner would have taken the next two heart tricks, and then played a diamond, to use up declarer's last trump. Then she could have trumped the next club trick, and played a spade to my ace. And I then could have cashed 2 diamond tricks. In all, partner would have won 3 heart tricks, I would have won 1 heart trick, 2 aces, and 2 long diamond tricks. We would have beaten the hand 5 tricks, for 1400 points.

Should I have not taken the spade ace? It would have been fine here, because partner held great hearts. But if declarer had held the heart ten instead of partner, then partner (in order to control the trumps) would have had to hold up with the heart king until the 3rd round of trumps. And then, instead of continuing hearts, declarer with the knowledge that hearts are 1-4, would have switched to clubs. Then the defense would have won 3 heart tricks, and 1 diamond trick, beating the hand only 1 trick.

Therefore, to assure getting a good penalty, my cashing the spade ace was good for the defense. It guaranteed getting a penalty of 300 points if declarer held the ♥10. It is rarely wrong to guarantee getting 95% of the matchpoints.

But, I think I could have gone for 100% of the matchpoints (+1400). If declarer held the ten of hearts, then she would have led a trump from her hand at trick 3. She didn't do that. Therefore partner has ♥10. And I can deduce that partner also has the ♥K, from the bidding and the play of the hand. Therefore it would have been logical for me to hope that declarer continued to misguess the hand and go for a 1400 penalty.

I found this hand fascinating, as I have never seen this exact situation where I deliberately misdescribed my values (my 4♦ bid shows an offensive hand, not a defensive hand), in order to set up the opponents for a likely penalty. I hope you have enjoyed it too.

But Joanna and Lew had the last laugh. They did well over the final sessions, and ended up bronze medalists in the event, while Gail and I ended up 41st out of 481 pairs. They might have won if they hadn't suffered this hand against us.