

## **TRAVIS-T(ip) #4**

By Barbara Travis

### **THINK BEFORE YOU PLAY TO THE FIRST TRICK**

#### **DUMMY**

**543**

**J4**

**AQJ98**

**AJ6**

#### **DECLARER**

**A10**

**A32**

**1075**

**KQ1085**

W	N	E	S
			1C
P	1D	X	1NT
P	3NT	All Pass	

In terms of the auction, South's rebid should be 1NT to show a balanced minimum, and North then raises to game.

West leads the S2. You can count 8 top tricks, and the diamond finesse will provide more tricks. The heading to this article, "Think before you play to the first trick", includes thinking about the opening lead. Many people would duck the spade lead at trick 1. However, with the card led being the S2, you already know the spades are breaking 4-4 so you have three losers in spades.

You should ask yourself, "Can anything go wrong if I duck the first trick?" The answer, "East might switch to hearts" guides you to your critical decision. If East does switch to hearts, then you will have the initial spade loser and at least three heart losers, assuming the diamond finesse fails.

In addition, the auction indicates that the diamond finesse could well fail, since East was the person who doubled.

So, having thought before playing at trick 1, you will win the first trick and take your diamond finesse, and when it fails you have your 9 tricks (losing 3 spades and 1 diamond).

Here's the full hand:

	<b>543</b>	
	<b>J4</b>	
	<b>AQJ98</b>	
	<b>AJ6</b>	
<b>Q872</b>		<b>KJ96</b>
<b>8765</b>		<b>KQ109</b>

642  
73

K3  
942

A10  
A32  
1075  
KQ1085

Equally, as defenders, you should stop and think at trick 1. If South ducks your SK, you should switch to the HK rather than automatically return partner's lead. Why? Well you can see that the diamond finesse is failing, so you can count five winners as long as you establish your heart tricks now!

If you can see a sure way to defeat the contract in your own hand, then there is no need to always return your partner's suit.

Here's another 'typical' hand where as declarer you might go down because you haven't thought enough at trick 1:

**DUMMY**

A543  
K43  
1043  
432

**DECLARER**

2  
A72  
AKQJ987  
A6

All vulnerable

W	N	E	S
4S	P	P	5D

All Pass

West leads the SK and you have to plan your play. You have 7 diamond tricks, 2 heart tricks, 1 spade trick and 1 club trick = 11 tricks.

However your first thought should be what you think West has for a vulnerable 4S opening bid. Usually it shows an 8-card suit (or a wildly distributional hand). If West has an 8-card suit, then East will be void in spades and the SA will be ruffed.

Do you need to play the SA at trick 1? No – you could let the SK win, then trump the next spade lead yourself. Later you can use the SA to discard either your heart or club loser. Therefore, you should follow this plan of play, using that SA later in the hand.

In summary, when you are reasonably confident a card will be ruffed, this about whether you should play low and use the winner later in the hand to discard another loser.