

The ABC of Bridge
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The entire series of ABC articles focuses on being able to reconstruct the unseen bridge hands as if you were seeing the hand in the bridge column of the newspaper. Using Counting, Communicating, and Curiosity, the goal is to apply bridge logic to arrive at the best result whether it is reaching the correct contract, defeating the contract, making the contract, or attacking with the correct opening lead.

Applying the ABCs of Bridge is very well illustrated in the following hand, played in my Wednesday evening social game at my condo. However, instead of showing you the full hand, it will be more instructive to examine each hand beginning with the East hand. The auction was as follows:

<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>W</u>
1♠	P	2♥	P
2♠	P	3♣	P
4♠	P	5♠	P
P	P		

WARNING: Unlike other published bridge hands, NORTH is the declarer, not South. I was South and was not a “hand hog.”

The East hand is ♠ 9762 ♥ 842 ♦ K9753 ♣ 2. As East you are on opening lead. Assuming that each player is reasonably skilled in bridge, what is your opening lead and why? Hopefully your analysis of the auction led you to the 5♦ as your opening lead. Applying the Counting principle, you should reason that South has shown an opening hand with at least 10 cards in hearts and clubs. ♦ If so, South has 3 other cards in spades and diamonds. ♦ Did South make a slam try? YES he did. What did South not bid? BLACKWOOD. Why? Your logic leads you to the conclusion that South has one spade and two diamonds and a Blackwood inquiry would have been inappropriate. South instead elected to bid 5♠ to direct North’s attention to the fact that South had two losing diamonds and if North can prevent the defense from winning two diamond tricks, they belonged in slam.

Let us look at the South hand: ♠ 8 ♥ AKJ95 ♦ Q10 ♣ AQJ74. What was South’s reasoning for conducting the auction in the way he did? South concluded that North’s jump to 4♠ in a game forcing auction was intended to show a solid spade suit with no losers. North’s rebid of 2♠ showed at least a 6-card suit. Furthermore South believed that it was very likely that his Hearts and Clubs would provide North with at least 5 winning tricks and that the risk lay in the fact that

South had 2 losing diamonds. Thus South felt that his bid of 5♠ would bring attention to the diamond situation.

North's hand was: ♠ AKQJ103 ♥ Q7 ♦ J4 ♣ 1095. Did North bid his hand correctly? YES he did. His declarer play, unfortunately, was not as solid as his bidding as East decided to lead his singleton club. Let's look at the entire hand and follow the actual play of the hand.

	North	
	♠ AKQJ103	
	♥ Q7	
	♦ J4	
	♣ 1095	
West		East
♠ 54		♠ 9762
♥ 1063		♥ 842
♦ A862		♦ K9753
♣ K863		♣ 2
	South	
	♠ 8	
	♥ AKJ95	
	♦ Q10	
	♣ AQJ74	

The declarer, North, did not study the entire hand before playing to the first trick. Instead of counting his losers and winners, North saw the "opportunity" to finesse and he played low from dummy. West, upon winning his K♣ had no difficulty in surmising that East's lead was a singleton and returned the 3♣ to show his entry was in diamonds. Thus he demonstrated the Communicating principle of the ABC of Bridge. What followed was not pretty. East ruffed the club return and led a diamond to his partner's A♦. Of course, West played another club which East trumped. East then cashed his K♦ for down 3. Had North captured the first club trick, North would have won twelve tricks instead of going down three tricks.

Key to this entire discussion is to recognize the importance of always thinking and avoiding the tendency to play on autopilot. Discipline yourself to always apply the ABCs of Bridge.