

Vanderbilt by Derrick Browne

Your left hand opponent opens 1D, your partner passes, and your right hand opponent responds 1S. Vulnerable against not, what action do you take with this hand?

S AJ3  
H 74  
D A3  
C AKQ862

One of the world's toughest knockout teams events is America's Vanderbilt. Going into the last set of 16 boards in this year's final, Fleisher-Kamil, Levin-Weinstein and Martel-Stansby led by 24 IMPs against Zimmermann-Multon, Helgemo-Helness and Bessis-Bessis. Father and son combination Michel and Thomas Bessis proceeded to bid five games not reached at the other table and made four of them, to win the match.

These were the last two swinging boards of the event.

Dealer North, EW vul.

NORTH  
S T5  
H AKT9  
D KJ974  
C 73

WEST	EAST
S AJ3	S Q84
H 74	H QJ652
D A3	D QT2
C AKQ862	C 54

SOUTH  
S K9762  
H 83  
D 865  
C JT9

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>T Bessis</i>	<i>Martel</i>	<i>M Bessis</i>	<i>Stansby</i>
	1D	Pass	1S
3NT	All pass		

If clubs run, the West hand has eight top tricks. Thomas gambled on 3NT which made for an 11 IMP pickup when West at the other table subsided in 3C. Then on the very next board:

Dealer East, both vul.

NORTH  
S AJ643  
H T7  
D KQT86  
C 6

WEST	EAST
S T8	S Q72
H KQ4	H A986
D A75	D J92
C J9875	C AK2

SOUTH  
S K95  
H J532  
D 43  
C QT43

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<i>T Bessis</i>	<i>Martel</i>	<i>M Bessis</i>	<i>Stansby</i>
		1C	Pass
1D	1S	Pass	2S
Dble	Pass	3D	Pass
3NT	All pass		

Again, the other table played in 3C while Thomas finished up declaring 3NT as West – even though North had overcalled in spades, and South had raised.

North led a low spade, South inserted the S9, and Thomas won with the S10. Next he cashed the A-K of clubs then led a third club. South won the CQ and figured that surely West (Thomas) would not have bid 3NT without the spades stopped, hence he must have the bare SA left. Accordingly, South led a *low* spade. The spade suit was now blocked, so Thomas won his contract – and the event.