

Autumn win by *Derrick Browne*

The Trumps Autumn Teams on 23 May was convincingly won by Warren Dobes, Chris Dibley, Wayne Smith and Grant Cowen. These deals come from this event.

Vulnerable against not, what opening do you make as dealer with this hand?

S -  
H AJ8765432  
D J5  
C Q5

More on that later. Meanwhile, consider your lead as West after the opponents use Stayman then finish in 3NT:

Dealer North, EW vul.

NORTH  
S T986  
H A75  
D 85  
C J943

WEST  
S Q432  
H 984  
D KT62  
C 65

EAST  
S 75  
H QJ63  
D J94  
C A872

SOUTH  
S AKJ  
H KT2  
D AQ73  
C KQT

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
Pass	Pass	Pass	2NT
Pass	3C	Pass	3D
Pass	3NT	All pass	

At every table, 3NT was reached. At all but three tables, it made. Most Wests led a diamond or a spade. If, as was the case, declarer has the missing top honours in these suits, such a lead concedes a trick, presenting the contract on a platter.

Fearful of such a layout (an unsurprising one, given that South has shown about 21 HCP), some West's opted for the safe, passive lead of a heart, the MUD (middle-up-down) H8 or the top of nothing H9. This lead goes to East's HJ and South's HK.

South now leads the top clubs, with East winning the third round then leading a diamond. Leading low (the D4) would show interest in diamonds. Although East does have a high card in diamonds, best is to lead the D9 to deny interest in the suit, so West knows to switch back to hearts.

How should declarer play to make the contract? The winning line is to take the DA, then play spades from the top, establishing the S10 as the ninth trick. This time West gets the lead and can not profitably lead declarer's danger suit, diamonds. Even if East won the SQ then led a diamond, declarer would just cover East's card and the contract would still be safe, thanks to the power of the D7.

Dealer West, EW vul.

NORTH  
S K972  
H KT  
D 9842  
C JT6

WEST  
S -  
H AJ8765432  
D J5  
C Q5

EAST  
S AQ854  
H 9  
D AT7  
C 8432

SOUTH  
S JT63  
H Q  
D KQ63  
C AK97

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
4H	Pass	Pass	Dble
Pass	4S	All pass	

With a 9-card suit, it is normal to pre-empt at game level, and even at this vulnerability West should bid 4H, not the cowardly 3H chosen by some players. The only losers in 4H are a heart and two clubs (the diamond loser goes away on East's SA).

Nowadays many players use double of even a 4-level pre-empt as takeout. Despite the bad spade break, 4S doubled was a good sacrifice, two down for 300 points.