

Counting to lucky 13 by Derrick Browne

It is sometimes said that if you can count to 13, you can be a bridge expert. Top players will not only work out the distribution of the 13 cards in a particular suit and in a particular person's hand, but then use that knowledge to build up a picture of other suits and someone else's hand.

However, counting doesn't have to be as complicated as that. Here is a deal from the Trumps Festival Pairs early this year:

E/NS	S AK2		
	H T982		
	D 985		
	C QT2		
S 975		S T4	
H Q		H 643	
D A643		D KJT72	
C A9753		C KJ6	
	S QJ863		
	H AKJ75		
	D Q		
	C 84		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		Pass	1S
Pass	2S	3D	3H
4D	4H	Pass	Pass
5D	Pass	Pass	5H
All pass			

Louise Kobler, sitting South, figured that doubling the 5D sacrifice and taking it one or two down would provide little compensation for her vulnerable game, so she pressed on to 5H.

West was Josh Wyner, who cashed the DA then thought for a moment before the next trick. Counting East for five diamonds for the overcall, he knew declarer could ruff the next round. He also knew that declarer had at least five spades and on those long spades, club losers would be discarded from dummy unless the defence quickly cashed their tricks there. Accordingly, he switched to the CA and another club, for one down.

After your opponents open 1H : 2H, 2S : 3S, 4S, what should you lead with this hand from the Festival Teams congress?

S A6
H T876
D 95432
C A7

With the opponents having shown at least eight hearts, partner is marked with a singleton, and Garry Clarke found the killing lead of a heart. Declarer won that, but Garry won the next trick with the SA, to lead a heart for partner to ruff. Back in with the CA, he gave partner a second heart ruff to take the contract one down.

One last hand from the Festival Teams:

S 63	S AK9
H AQJT43	H K75
D AT862	D KQ4
C —	C AJ87

WEST	EAST
1H	2C
2D	2S
3D	3H
4H	4NT
5S	7H

The bid of the fourth suit (2S) asked for more information. West showed the fifth diamond and then, in answer to Roman Keycard Blackwood, showed two aces and the queen of trumps. East didn't know West had six hearts but could count five likely tricks in each red suit on top of the three black winners, so bid grand slam.