

Farokh Engineer



FAROKH Engineer's test cricket career started in 1961 and continued to 1975; he was India's first-choice wicket-keeper for most of that period. As a batsman, he plundered 94 before lunch on the first day in the Madras test in 1966-67. Farokh also lent his face – and hair! – to the Brylcreem advertising campaign.

How did you start playing bridge?

I had a knee replacement operation – not an uncommon occurrence for a cricketer – and was bored during the long recovery period that followed. A friend took me to the Manchester Bridge Club; I played a few times and was hooked! As in cricket, I didn't take lessons but just threw myself in at the deep end. However, I had help from Jeff Morris, owner of Manchester BC, who gave me a portable bridge-playing computer to practise with.

How often do you play?

Two or three times a week, either rubber or duplicate.

What does bridge mean to you?

A lot! It keeps my mind alert. As in cricket, you never stop learning.

If you could change one thing about bridge, what would it be?

I would discourage from playing those opinionated people who make life a misery for others with gratuitous criticism. The really good players are not like that and advise only when asked!

What are your hobbies outside bridge?

More bridge! But I also do a lot of commentating for the media all over the world – mostly cricket, but I hope bridge will be next!

Lead your strongest suit against five-of-a-minor contracts

DO you like to play five-of-a-minor at pairs? Of course not – you prefer the higher-scoring 3NT.

Now switch seats, and say you, as West, are defending an opposing five-of-a-minor game. There are two main possibilities:

1. The opponents have misjudged and should be playing 3NT.
2. The opponents have done well to avoid 3NT, because they have an unstoppable suit.

You do not have to concern yourself with Point 1. If your opponents are in 5♦, and all other North-Souths are making over-tricks in 3NT, you have a top whatever you do. But if Point 2 is the case, you must cash your winners in the suit in which you have the cashing tricks – before they run away.

N/S Game. Dealer South.

	♠ K 8	
	♥ 10 4	
	♦ K 10 7	
	♣ A 9 7 6 3 2	
♠ Q J 9 7	♦ W N E	♠ 10 6 5 4 2
♥ A Q 3 2	S	♥ K J 6 5
♦ 8 6		♦ 4 3
♣ 10 8 5		♣ Q J
	♠ A 3	
	♥ 9 8 7	
	♦ A Q J 9 5 2	
	♣ K 4	

West	North	East	South
Pass	2♣	Pass	1♦
Pass	3♦	Pass	2♦
All Pass		Pass	5♦ ¹

¹ Worth a game, with the fine six-card suit, side ace, and promoted ♣K (in the light of partner's response in the suit). But 5♦? The scientists might bid a stopper-



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showing 3♠, but three small hearts – even (especially) facing three small hearts in dummy – may work okay for no-trumps. I'd gamble 3NT.

What should you lead to 5♦?

At the table West looked no further than the queen of spades. Declarer won the ace, drew trumps, then played king, ace and a third club, ruffing the suit good. A spade over to dummy enabled him to cash the three long clubs, throwing all his hearts away. Thirteen tricks, game made plus two, and North-South plus 640.

At most other tables the contract was 3NT. No surprises there. One or two Wests led a heart (holding declarer to nine tricks), but, not surprisingly (leading from ace-queen to four against a no-trump contract is not a long-term winner) most led a spade. Declarer could now cash ten tricks for plus 630.

Do you see what I'm getting at? Our West defending 5♦ should have reasoned as follows: 'If North-South hold the king of hearts, they will likely make 3NT with over-tricks, in which case I will get a top defending 5♦ whatever I lead. But if partner holds the king of hearts, I must cash our hearts.'

Letting declarer make all thirteen tricks in 5♦ gave East-West a near bottom. Had West led the ace of hearts (then a second heart), holding declarer to plus 600, he would have scored a near-top.

Andrew's Tip: When the opponents reach five-of-a-minor (as opposed to 3NT), play them to be off a cashing suit. Lead from your strongest suit. □