

## Spring Fours 2016 – Bulletin 3 – Brian Senior

### Avoidance Play

Sometimes it is crucial to keep one opponent off lead. Doing so often involves a technique called an Avoidance Play. 13-year old Liz Gahan showed that she is already familiar with this technique, bringing home her thin no trump game on this deal from Round 3.

Board 7. Dealer South. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
Plackett	Bakhshi	Jourdain	Gahan
–	–	–	Pass
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

Jasmine Bakhshi opened 1♥ then invited the no trump game and Gahan accepted. The lead was a diamond to the ace and Patrick Jourdain returned the jack to declarer's king. Gahan took the club finesse, the jack losing to the king, and Jourdain cleared the diamonds. Now Gahan led the nine of hearts and ran it. Jourdain won with the king rather than the jack, a thoughtful play – if West held the queen-eight he would be able to win the second defensive heart trick and gain the lead to cash the thirteenth diamond – and returned a low spade. Declarer misguessed, her jack being beaten by the queen. She won the ace and cashed three rounds of clubs then led the ten of hearts and again ducked the trick to East. The three-three heart split meant that Gahan had nine tricks and her contract.

By no means everyone managed to make nine tricks on this deal, those falling short including at least sometime English international player.

## Percentage Play?

It is important to know your percentages in bridge but it is even more important to apply those percentages correctly. This deal came up during Round 4 of the main event in Stratford.

Board 14. Dealer East. None Vul.

	♠	Q J 7 6 5		
	♥	5		
	♦	Q 10 8		
	♣	Q J 10 7		
♠	10 3		♠	A 9 2
♥	A K Q		♥	J 10 6
♦	9 7 6 5 3		♦	A J
♣	9 6 2		♣	A K 8 4 3
	♠	K 8 4		
	♥	9 8 7 4 3 2		
	♦	K 4 2		
	♣	5		
<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>	
–	–	1NT	Pass	
3NT	All Pass			

There would be no story had South led a spade, and both South players did give serious consideration to doing so, but eventually both chose a heart. Declarer won and led the two of clubs and North followed with the seven. Now came the parting of the ways.

Janet De Botton covered with the eight and was no doubt charmed when it held the trick. It was a simple matter to clear the clubs and four clubs, three hearts and two aces gave her nine tricks and her contract for +400.

In the other room the professional East knew his percentages and went up with the ace at trick two. He could no longer make the contract. He argued, correctly, that there were three possible honour singletons and only two possible small singletons, hence to play a top card on the first round, ready to lead back to the nine on the second round should South drop an honour, was the correct percentage play.

I suggested that the appearance of the seven from North should make a difference and this was dismissed as 'oh, it could be a falsecard'. Well, I think that the majority of players would follow with the five from HH75 and that the appearance of the seven does make a difference. So I'm with Janet. I think she played correctly and outperformed the pro at the other table, fully deserving her 10-IMP swing.

## Winning Line

Board 12 of Round 5 produced swings in many matches, though the contract was almost always identical.

Board 12. Dealer West. N/S Vul.

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

Depending on system, sometimes North and sometimes South was declarer, but the popular spot was 4♠ and the normal lead was a heart.

Say declarer is South so the lead is the queen of hearts. Declarer wins the ace and plays a diamond, East taking the ace and returning a heart to the king. Declarer ruffs a diamond, crosses to the ace of spades and ruffs another diamond, bringing down the queen. Now the winning line is to lead a club to the ace to play the winning jack of diamonds. East ruffs but declarer discards his heart loser, ruffs the heart return and knocks out the king of clubs to set up his tenth trick. Somewhere along the way he has to draw the missing trumps but, as the cards lie, this line brings home the bacon.

But this is all about which defender holds the king of clubs. If West has the club king, declarer needs to lead a club to the jack rather than to the ace. If he leads first to the ace, as described above, when he later plays the second club to knock out the king, West has the thirteenth heart and playing that defeats the contract.

So, should declarer lead to the ace or to the jack on the first round of clubs? A top player may prefer to rely on his table presence to judge what is the winning play. In terms of pure percentages, however, what does he know? West appears to have four diamonds and one spade, and after two rounds of the suit declarer may think that he knows that West also has four hearts. That leaves room for four clubs, leaving East with three. If those assumptions are correct, West is the more likely to hold the club king by four-to-three, or a bit over 57%. On the actual lie of the cards, the percentage play sees the contract fail, while table presence may see it succeed.

## Falsecard

Rob Helle fooled Tom Cohen on this deal from Round 4.

Board 27. Dealer South. None Vul.

	♠	—		
	♥	A J 8 4		
	♦	Q J 8 7 6 5		
	♣	K 10 8		
♠		K Q 10 9 7 4	♠	6 5 3 2
♥		9 6 3	♥	10
♦		3	♦	K 10 4
♣		7 5 2	♣	A Q 9 4 3
	♠	A J 8		
	♥	K Q 7 5 2		
	♦	A 9 2		
	♣	J 6		

West	North	East	South
<b>Helle</b>	<b>Sherman</b>	<b>Hoogenkamp</b>	<b>Cohen</b>
—	—	—	1♥
2♠	3♠	4♣	Pass
4♠	5♦	Pass	5♥
All Pass			

Helle led the five of clubs to the eight and queen and Hoogenkamp cashed the ace, on which Helle played the seven. The Dutch pair lead low from a doubleton, Polish style, so when Hoogenkamp continued with a third club it looked right to Cohen to ruff high as clubs seemed to be six-two, entirely consistent with the auction. He did so, drew trumps and played on diamonds, but there was a third-round loser in that suit and the contract had to go one down for -50. Of course, that third-round loser could have gone away on the third round of clubs, but for Helle's cunning falsecard.