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DYNAMIC DECLARER PLAY PART II

Dear Readers!

The techniques required to play a bridge hand are similar to those for driving a car. A beginner has to concentrate on changing gear, accelerating, braking and signalling at the proper time. An experienced king of the highways performs these actions automatically and can therefore concentrate better on the road. The ability to foresee the response time of other drivers requires further expertise and the same thing applies to playing out the hand. How can you achieve the expertise of a “king of a bridge table”? The best solution is to acquire so much knowledge of good dummy play that you can handle most technical types of hand automatically, without conscious effort.

My book is dedicated to this end. You will find 340 hands covering almost all the problems that you might encounter at the table. I suggest that you tackle no more than ten problems daily. When you have gradually made your way through all the problems, I recommend that you repeat the process. You will remember many of the hands and that is the point. The others will be easier to analyse than during the first encounter.

I have divided the problems on declarer play into four categories.

- clubs ♣.
The problems do not require long analysis. It is enough to know the main theme.
- diamonds ♦.
You have to have an idea of the required technique. Once you decide the necessary technique, you will not encounter any problems.
- hearts ♥.
Knowledge of the required technique and good analytical skill are needed to handle these problems.
- spades ♠.
Problems marked as spades are difficult, complicated and multi-variant. Solving such a problem will give you a lot of satisfaction.

I would like to make your problem-solving more attractive and all bridge players love the atmosphere of competition. The European Team Championships in Tenerife were held from 17 to 30 June 2001. Some 35 teams took part in the Championships. You will play 10-board matches against each of the teams. The actual hands have been composed by me and do not come from these Championships. You face your opponents in the Open Room and then compare your results with those achieved in the Closed Room. On each hand you may win or lose a lot of IMPs.

The defenders will play natural leads against you:

- a) **fourth best**,
- b) **high** from the doubleton,
- c) **second best** from three and more spot-cards.

The number of IMPs that you win (or... lose) will be calculated into Victory Points. You are now halfway in the EC. You have played 17 rounds.

2. ROUND XIX – MATCH AGAINST WALES

West is declarer on all the hands.

11. Contract 3NT. Lead ♠J.	♠ A 3 ♥ A K 4 2 ♦ A 3 2 ♣ Q J 3 2	N ♥ W E S	♠ 8 2 ♥ 3 ♦ Q 10 9 7 6 ♣ A 10 9 8 7
12. Contract 4♣. Lead ♣Q.	♠ 3 ♥ 10 3 ♦ Q J 4 2 ♣ K 10 9 8 4 3	N ♦ W E S	♠ K 7 6 4 ♥ K 9 5 2 ♦ A ♣ A 7 5 2
13. Contract 1♥. Lead ♦5.	♠ A K ♥ Q 9 8 7 6 4 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ 4 3	N ♦ W E S	♠ 10 9 7 6 4 ♥ 10 ♦ K 8 7 2 ♣ Q 9 8
14. Contract 6♣. Lead ♠A and ♥5.	♠ K Q 6 ♥ K J 9 8 ♦ A 10 ♣ A K 4 2	N ♠ W E S	♠ 9 ♥ A ♦ K 8 7 6 4 3 2 ♣ Q J 8 7
15. Contract 4♠. After 1♠ opening North bid 2♣. Lead ♦K. North discards ♣7 on the first spade.	♠ A 7 5 3 2 ♥ Q J 4 ♦ A 2 ♣ A K 6	N ♥ W E S	♠ Q J 10 9 ♥ 10 8 6 5 ♦ 8 7 4 ♣ Q 4
16. Contract 3♦. Lead ♠9.	♠ A J 5 3 ♥ 9 5 ♦ A K Q J 10 ♣ A 8	N ♦ W E S	♠ Q 6 2 ♥ 8 7 4 3 ♦ 5 3 2 ♣ 9 6 3
17. Contract 3NT. Lead ♠J.	♠ K 6 4 ♥ K ♦ A 8 5 3 ♣ A J 7 6 4	N ♥ W E S	♠ A 7 5 ♥ A Q 8 7 5 4 ♦ J 7 4 ♣ 5
18. Contract 6♣. South opened 3♥. Lead ♥10.	♠ A Q 4 ♥ A K ♦ A 8 3 2 ♣ A K 10 2	N ♠ W E S	♠ K 8 7 6 ♥ 4 3 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ 9 8 7 5
19. Contract 5♦. Lead ♥Q.	♠ A K 2 ♥ A ♦ A 10 8 7 3 2 ♣ A K Q	N ♦ W E S	♠ 6 5 3 2 ♥ 8 7 5 4 ♦ K 6 ♣ 10 8 4
20. Contract 6♠. South opened 2♥. Lead ♥10. ♥A, ♠A, ♠K – North plays ♣2.	♠ A K J 10 9 7 ♥ A 4 ♦ Q 8 7 5 ♣ A	N ♦ W E S	♠ 4 3 2 ♥ Q 7 ♦ A K 4 2 ♣ K 9 7 5

2. Solutions of the play problems from the match with Wales.

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

The main point – combine all your chances but do not exaggerate.

The author of the problem recommends cashing the diamond ace before finessing the club king. This is a typical teaching mistake.

- Such declarer play does not pay on the long run. The chance of finding a singleton king of diamonds with South is less than 3%, which means that you will gain 30 IMP playing a hundred of boards like this one. You will gain IMPs only when the ♣K was offside, so perhaps the 30 number should be halved?

Some 97 times you will go down an extra trick (sometimes two). All in all, it will bring you about 200 IMP loss.

The second disadvantage of this approach is disrespect of an opponent. South holding ♦KJ bare may easily play the king. He will see five potential club tricks in a dummy. A talented player will also rise with the king when holding KJx. When you finesse the ♦10 subsequently, the defenders will cash four spade tricks.

Closed room - contract 6♣ - one off, + 50 for NS.

You finessed the club – down one: you stayed level.

You played the ace of diamonds and finessed the club – three down: + 150 = - 3 IMP.

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

The main point – combine all your chances, specifically those that will give you the certainty of making the contract.

Order of play:

1. – 2. Take the trick with the ace of clubs (the suit breaks 2-1) and cash the ace of diamonds.
3. Cross to your hand with a club.
4. Play a small heart to the nine.

See for yourself that however the cards lie, the opponents are powerless.

Closed room - your team mates played 3♠ contract two down, +200 for Wales.

A heart to the nine: +130 = -2 IMP.

You played it differently: – 2 IMP because the king of diamonds was onside.

		♠ Q 8 3 2 ♥ K J ♦ Q 9 6 5 ♣ K 10 6	
13. Contract 1♥. Lead ♦5.	♠ A K ♥ Q 9 8 7 6 4 ♦ A 4 3 ♣ 4 3	N ♦ W E S	♠ 10 9 7 6 4 ♥ 10 ♦ K 8 7 2 ♣ Q 9 8
		♠ J 5 ♥ A 5 3 2 ♦ J 10 ♣ A J 7 5 2	

The main point – take your tricks. Risks are everywhere.

Order of play:

1 – 3. Win the trick with the king of diamonds and play a heart. North wins the trick with the jack and plays another diamond.

4 – 5. Cash the ace and king of spades. If you continue with trumps before cashing your spade honours the opponents will manage to ruff a spade.

Closed room - contract 2NT (South) – one off, +100 for EW.

You played the ace and king of spades: +80 = -1 IMP.

If not: -100 = -5 IMP.

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

The main point – the obvious line is not necessarily the best line.

Order of play:

3 – 4. Draw trumps in two rounds with the queen and jack in the dummy!!!!

They break 4-1 with North holding four of them.

5 – 6. Cross with the ace of diamonds and ruff a heart.

Draw trumps and cash the spade winners. If the queen of hearts is with three diamonds – the squeeze will play itself. This chance is more with the odds than playing for singleton club with a singleton diamond in the same hand. An opponent with 6-5 shape in the majors would surely enter the bidding.

Closed room - contract 3NT, + 400 for Wales.

You played it the way I suggested: + 920 = + 11 IMP.

Differently: – 10 IMP.

		♠ - ♥ A 9 3 ♦ K Q J 9 ♣ J 10 9 8 7 3	
15. Contract 4♠. After 1♠ opening North overcalled 2♣. Lead ♦K. North discards ♣7 on the first spade.	♠ A 7 5 3 2 ♥ Q J 4 ♦ A 2 ♣ A K 6	N ♥ W E S	♠ Q J 10 9 ♥ 10 8 6 5 ♦ 8 7 4 ♣ Q 4
		♠ K 8 6 4 ♥ K 4 2 ♦ 10 6 5 3 ♣ 5 2	

The main point – this is a chess problem. Plan your play right at the start.

Order of play:

1. Win the ace of diamonds.
2. Cross to the dummy with the queen of clubs.
3. Play the queen of spades to finesse the king – North follows with a club. North shape is probably– 0-3-4-6 (South gave a count discard on the first trick).
- 4 – 5. You have to play exactly two more rounds of trumps.
 - a) South plays the king.
6. Play the queen of hearts.
7. The defenders will force you with diamonds (if they play a club, a heart or a spade - no problem).
8. Undeterred, you play the jack of hearts.
9. The opponent wins the trick and plays a diamond for the fourth time – ruff in hand and that is the end of your struggle.
 - b) South does not play the king of spades.

Third diamond ruff in hand and the fourth one in the dummy.
 If the opponents defend differently there is no risk.

Closed room - contract 3♦ doubled down one +200 for Wales.
 You played it precisely: + 420 = +6 IMP.
 You failed: – 6 IMP.

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

The main point – the key play often has to be made on the first trick.

Order of play:

1. Play the queen of spades and duck the king! After crossing to hand, draw two rounds of trumps and ruff the fourth spade.

Closed room - contract 2♦ , + 90 for Wales.

You played the queen of spades and ducked the king: + 110 = +1 IMP.

If not: – 5 IMP.

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

The main point – looking for a chance to bring the contract home at any cost does not pay on the long run.

Order of play:

1. Duck the spade.
 2. Win the next one with the king in hand.
 - 3 - 4. Cash the king of hearts and duck a diamond.
 5. The defenders will continue spades.
 - 6 – 7. Check the distribution of hearts and concede a diamond.
- Result – one down.

Closed room - contract 4♥. Lead ♠2, one off, + 50 for NS.

You followed the suggested line: no swing.

You overtook the king of hearts: three off, + 150 for NS = -3 IMP.

The author of a similar problem suggests overtaking the ♥K, hoping for a doubleton with two honours: J10, J9 or 109. This is a poor declarer play. We may accept overtaking if North plays a “big” card. A chance of finding South with two high cards in a doubleton is less than 5%, which means that in five boards out of one hundred you will earn 10 IMP each = 50 IMP (in non-vulnerable position).

In 36 boards you will lose 1 IMP (an overtrick) = 36 IMP.

In 54 you will lose 2 IMP (additional setting trick) = 108 IMP

In the remaining five boards North will hold a big card.

At game all, such play is even more pointless.

Let's change the heart suit slightly:

♥ K ♥ A Q 9 8 6 4

Now the chance to find a heart honour in a doubleton is almost 30%.

By overtaking the king with the ace in 30 boards out of hundred you will gain 10 IMP = 300 IMP. In 36 boards you will lose 1 IMP = 36 IMP.

To make things simpler – in the remaining 34 boards you will lose 2 IMP per board, which makes 68 IMP. Now the profit and loss account looks much better.

		♠ J 10 5 3 ♥ 10 6 ♦ Q J 6 5 4 ♣ J 4	
18. Contract 6♣. South opened 3♥. Lead ♥10.	♠ A Q 4 ♥ A K ♦ A 8 3 2 ♣ A K 10 2	N ♠ W E S	♠ K 8 7 6 ♥ 4 3 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ 9 8 7 5
		♠ 9 2 ♥ Q J 9 8 7 5 2 ♦ 10 ♣ Q 6 3	

The main point – crazy contracts need favourable distributions.

You have to find three clubs with South, who also holds seven hearts.
 Does it have to be three clubs with the queen and jack? Not necessarily. Playing for a ruff and discard opens new possibilities. There are possibilities of a spade and diamond squeeze against North. How can you set up the squeeze? You have to eliminate three cards from South.

Order of play:

- 2 – 4. Draw two rounds of trumps and play the second heart.
5. Play a diamond to the king.
6. Now a diamond to hand.
 - a) South follows with the second diamond.
- 7 – 8. Cash a spade and concede a club.

Here is the final position:

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

9. Ruff South's heart exit in hand, discarding a diamond from the dummy, and the squeeze plays itself – North has to throw a diamond. Establish a diamond trick by ruffing the suit in the dummy.

b) South follows with a heart to the second diamond trick.

The assumed shape is 2-7-1-3.

You need to know the criss-cross squeeze.

7 – 9. Cash the ace and king of spades and concede a club. This is the final position:

		♠ J 10 ♥ - ♦ Q J ♣ -	
	♠ Q ♥ - ♦ 8 3 ♣ 10	N W E S	♠ 8 7 ♥ - ♦ 9 ♣ 9
		♠ --- ♥ Q J 9 8 7 ♦ - ♣ -	

10. South plays a heart. Ruff in hand, discarding a diamond from the dummy. North is powerless.

Closed room - contract 3 NT, +430 for Wales.

If you played for a criss-cross squeeze you may be proud of yourself.

Result +920 = +10 IMP.

You failed: – 10 IMP.

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

The main point – you have to plan your play carefully.

Order of play:

1. Take the trick with the ace of hearts.
2. Play ♦10.
 - a) North follows with a small card – duck the ten of diamonds (a chance of singleton 9 with South).
 - b) North plays the diamond nine, jack or queen – rise with the king and finesse on the way back.

Closed room - contract 3 NT, + 600 for EW.

You played ♦10; no swing.

You played it differently: – 12 IMP.

		♠ 8 ♥ 10 9 5 ♦ J 9 6 3 ♣ J 8 6 4 2	
20. Contract 6♠. South opened 2♥. Lead ♥10. ♥A, ♠A, ♠K – North follows with ♣2.	♠ A K J 10 9 7 ♥ A 4 ♦ Q 8 7 5 ♣ A	N ♦ W E S	♠ 4 3 2 ♥ Q 7 ♦ A K 4 2 ♣ K 9 7 5
		♠ Q 6 5 ♥ K J 8 6 3 2 ♦ 10 ♣ Q 10 3	

The main point – a possible squeeze has to be engineered.

Order of play:

1. Win the trick with the ace of clubs.
- 2 – 3. Cash the ace and king of spades. North shows out on the second round of trumps and discards ♣2.
- 4 – 5. Cross to dummy with a diamond and pitch a heart to the king of clubs.
6. Ruff a club!!!

South's most likely shape is 3-6-1-3 and we can catch North in a diamond-club squeeze.

Closed room – contract 6♦, + 1370 for Wales.

You managed to engineer the squeeze: + 1430 = +2 IMP.

If not: – 16 IMP.

The pool of points to win was big: +27 IMP = 21 - 9 VP.

Round XX – you will now fight against Romania.