

## BRIDGE BY THE LAKE

By Ken Masson



F. Scott Fitzgerald once wrote that “The rich are different than you or me” to which his friend Ernest Hemingway retorted: “Yes, they have more money.” In bridge terms, we might say that the stars of the game are also different; they make plays that mere mortals may never contemplate.

The illustrated deal occurred in the latter stages of the 2011 U.S. Seniors Bridge Championships. Long-time professional Fred Hamilton, sitting West, opened 2 hearts in first seat, showing a hand with between 6 and 10 high card points and a good six card suit. One might quibble about the quality of the suit in this case as most teachers require their students to

have 2 of the top 3 or 3 of the top 5 honors to open a weak two bid, but in the modern game players try to get the opening bid in wherever feasible.

North liked his hand sufficiently to offer a bid of 3 clubs, and although East might have ventured a weak 2 spade bid himself had he been first to speak, he did not have the values to enter the auction at this juncture. With a balanced hand, a full opening bid of his own, and hearts well stopped, South quite confidently closed the proceedings with a call of 3 no trump.

Now the spotlight turned on Hamilton to find the killing lead. His own suit, hearts, being somewhat lacking in luster, did not stand out. His left hand opponent had bid clubs, so that was probably not the best opening salvo. For diamonds to be right would have required his partner to have considerable values and length. So by the process of elimination, spades seemed to offer the best chance for his side, especially as the enemy had made no effort to find a fit in that suit.

But what spade to lead? We all learned in bridge kindergarten to lead low from a 3 card suit but West could see the problem this could pose – the suit could very easily block. So the only answer to this predicament was to lead a spade honor. As the cards lay, either would have fulfilled the function but Fred chose the king as least likely to confuse partner. And so it transpired – East was delighted to see his majesty hit the table and let West know by following with the very encouraging 10. West continued with the spade jack and East had to be careful to overtake it with the ace; when South produced the queen it was simplicity itself for East to cash the rest of his spades to set the contract by two tricks.

It might appear that West was taking a big chance in his selection of opening lead but in team games it is more common to make risky leads as you want to defeat the contract at all costs. But in a duplicate pairs game one would be less inclined to make such a play as the objective is not necessarily to put declarer down but rather to score better than all other pairs holding your cards.

In any event, the opening lead in this month's hand was spectacularly successful and worthy of admiration. Any other lead would have resulted in the contract making easily.

Questions or comments: email: [masson.ken@gmail.com](mailto:masson.ken@gmail.com)

♠ KJ4  
♥ K109632  
♦ 95  
♣ 65

♠ 83  
♥ VOID  
♦ A6432  
♣ AQ10943

♠ A109765  
♥ Q8  
♦ Q8  
♣ J82

♠ Q2  
♥ AJ754  
♦ KJ107  
♣ K7

**Vulnerability: Both**  
**Dealer: West**

**Bidding:**

North	East	South	West
			2♥
3♣	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

**Opening Lead: ?**