

## **BRIDGE BY THE LAKE**

By Ken Masson



The Lake Chapala Duplicate Bridge Club in Riberas began a mentoring program in 2010 that has proven to be a very worthwhile initiative. On two Mondays each month the regular duplicate game is replaced by one where each partnership consists of one experienced player and one who is newer to the game.

While still competitive, the game is played at a more relaxed pace than usual and the mentors are encouraged to let their partners know after the hand is completed where they believe improvements could be made in their bidding, declarer play or defense. One strict rule, though, is that a mentor in one partnership should never give advice to a mentee in another, unless requested! Partnerships can be arranged in advance or individual players can go to the club and be assigned to an appropriate partner.

This month's deal occurred at a mentoring game and the mentee (South) learned a lesson that most of us could benefit from: when playing a hand, keep your opponents guessing as long as possible as to your distribution and strength.

The bidding was short and sweet as North-South reached their optimum contract in three bids. East led the diamond 10 and declarer quickly went about his business, winning the ace in hand and returning to the dummy with the diamond king. South now called for a low heart and covered East's 8 with the *king* which won the trick. Declarer next cashed the club king and played another club to dummy's jack and East's queen.

At this point East paused to reflect on what he knew about South's hand: declarer had shown up with the diamond ace, the club king, the heart king (and apparently the heart ace as there would have been little point in West holding up that card when the king had been played). The likelihood was that South had a weak holding in spades as he had not tried for slam so mentor East switched to a low spade. The defense promptly cashed 3 spades to hold declarer to a total of 9 tricks and a top board for East-West as every other North-South made at least 10 tricks.

So where did declarer go wrong? He started off correctly by winning the opening lead in hand with the ace to ensure the suit did not block (play the high card from the short side first). Next he should have come to the club king and finessed dummy's jack before touching the heart suit. This play would have fulfilled the same function but would have left the defense in the dark about the heart suit.

Now put yourself in East's shoes when he won the club queen and had to decide what card to play next. Wouldn't the jack of hearts have been your choice?

The mentoring program is a great idea and the club executives deserve a round of applause for introducing it. I hope it will continue and that all the club's experienced players support it to the hilt.

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

♠ AQ4  
♥ Q73  
♦ 109872  
♣ 104

♠ 5  
♥ 642  
♦ KQJ4  
♣ AJ872

♠ J9732  
♥ AK5  
♦ A5  
♣ K65

♠ K1086  
♥ J1098  
♦ 63  
♣ Q93

**Vulnerability: North South**  
**Dealer: South**

**Bidding:**

North	East	South	West
		1 ♠	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	3 NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

**Opening Lead: ♦ 10**