

DON'S CORNER

by Don Gardner

You are playing in a regular weekly pair game. You and your partner bid to a spade game with this bidding (your 1NT opening is 16-18 points):

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
	1C	2H	2S
Pass	4S	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Your hands are:

North (Partner)

♠ K 9 8 3
♥ A K 7 5
♦ A 7
♣ J 7 2

South (You)

♠ A J 10 7 6 4
♥ 6 3
♦ Q 6
♣ Q 8 4

The opening lead is the 2♥. You have two problems to solve:

1. How to play the trump suit
2. How to deal with Jxx versus Qxx in clubs

Study your combined hands to answer these two questions before reading further.

Scroll down for the Solution.

SOLUTION

Here is the full layout:

	North (Partner)	
	♠ K 9 8 4	
	♥ A K 7 5	
	♦ A 7	
	♣ J 7 2	
West		East
♠ Q 5 2		♠ ---
♥ 2		♥ Q J 10 9 8 4
♦ K 9 5 3 2		♦ J 10 8 4
♣ K 10 5 3		♣ A 9 6
	South	
	♠ A J 10 7 6 4	
	♥ 6 3	
	♦ Q 6	
	♣ Q 8 4	

How to play the trump suit revolves around whether to play the ace first or the king. The most likely defender to be void in spades is the pre-emptor East, so the play of the A♠ is the best. East is void, so you have no trouble drawing trumps without loss.

The answer to the second question about clubs comes when you realize that you are likely to lose three club tricks if you lead the suit first, but only two if the opponents do. So you have to do everything you can to make them lead the suit.

You have some preliminary work to do before giving them the lead. Play the A♥ and ruff a heart. Play to the A♦ and ruff dummy's last heart. Now play a second diamond and care not which defender wins the trick. They will either have to lead a club (you play low from second hand) or give you a ruff-sluff (you pitch a club). Either way, you restrict your losses to three tricks.