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Blackwood on Bridge

By Easley Blackwood

My friend Mr. Dale may miss a delicate bidding inference now and then, but he is a pretty good man on management of the trump suit. In today's hand he handled a ticklish trump situation in fine style.

North-South vulnerable

North

(Miss Brash)  
S—K 9 4  
H—A  
D—A K 6 5  
C—A 9 7 6 5

West

(Mr. Abel)  
S—Q J 10 5  
H—K 9 8 2  
D—8 3  
C—K 10 8

East

(Mrs. Keen)  
S—3 6 3  
H—Q 6  
D—J 10 9 7  
C—Q J 4 3

The bidding:

North East South West  
1 C Pass 1 H Pass  
2 D Pass 2 H Pass  
3 NT Pass 4 H All pass

Mr. Abel opened the queen of

spades which was won on the

board with the king. The ace of

trumps was laid down and then

Mr. Dale entered his hand with

the queen of diamonds. Here he

made the key play—he led a

small trump, not the jack. Mr.

Abel played the eight, a club was

discarded from dummy and Mrs.

Keen won with her lone queen.

The spade return was won with

the ace in the closed hand and

the jack of hearts was led, driving

out Mr. Abel's king. The

jack of spades won the third

trick for the defenders but that

was all. Mr. Dale ruffed the next

spade lead, picked up Mr. Abel's

last trump and spread the hand.

Note that if Mr. Dale had led

the jack of hearts on the second

lead of the suit, Mrs. Keen's

queen would have won and Mr.

Abel would then hold the king-

nine of hearts over Mr. Dale's

ten-seven—two more sure win-

ners.

How did Mr. Dale know that

a low card for his second heart

lead would drive out one of the

enemy's high honors? He didn't.

But let's follow his reasoning. If

the opposing hearts were divid-

ed 3-3 there was no problem.

Only two tricks would be lost in

the suit whether Mr. Dale played the

jack or a low card on the

second round.

If the enemy's hearts were di-

vided 4-2 with the king-queen

and two more in one hand, then

there was no play for the con-

tract. But if one opponent had

a doubleton heart honor, then

it was imperative to avoid wast-

ing declarer's jack to drive it

out when it would have to be

played anyway.

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