

## THE ELIMINATION PLAY

### LL Wong & Poon Hua

Before we proceed to the actual hand, look at the following end positions:

1.	♥ xx ♦ x
	♥ Kx ♦ Q
	♥ AQ ♦ x
2.	♥ Qx ♦ x
	♥ Kx ♦ Q
	♥ Ax ♦ x
3.	♥ Ax ♦ x
	♥ Kx ♦ Q
	♥ Qx ♦ x

If you play the diamond from South, West will win the trick and has to lead away from his ♥K to present you two tricks in hearts. This is known as “throw-in” or “end play”.

At the 1<sup>st</sup> Open House, Board 10 was a tough hand for declarers playing 3NT.

Here’s the bidding at one of the tables:

EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH
Pass	Pass	1NT	2D*
2H**	2S	Dbf	Pass
3C <sup>‡</sup>	Pass	3NT	Dbf
Pass	Pass	Pass	

\* Shows both majors

\*\* Shows stopper in hearts

‡ Not comfortable with defending 2S as partner will be leading ♠AK and thus crashing the ♠Q. Hearts seem to be 3-3 with only one stopper in defence if partner has only one honour. Moreover, North made a vulnerable overcall and South made a free bid of 2S, suggesting some distribution, which will be against the defence.

EAST  
 ♦ Q  
 ♥ J 10 6  
 ♦ K 9 6 4  
 ♠ A 10 8 5 4

WEST  
 ♠ A K J 7  
 ♥ Q 9 8  
 ♦ A 5 2  
 ♣ Q 6 3

Lead ♥3. Plan your play.

Counting your tricks, you have four spades, one heart, two diamonds and one club, one trick short to fulfil your contract. Judging from the overcall of both majors, it is highly likely that defenders will have five tricks before you have your ninth.

You played the ♥6 from dummy and won in hand with the ♥8 after South played the ♥7. The lead seemed to indicate North holding a 5-card heart suit headed by the AK. North should also be marked with most of the high cards from his double.

Have you spotted that the pattern of your club suit look very similar to the above end positions? In order to reach there, you have to strip the North hand of all cards of exit, such that you can throw him in.

The full deal:

EAST	NORTH	SOUTH	WEST
♦ Q	♠ 8 6 3 2	♠ 10 9 5 4	♠ A K J 7
♥ J 10 6	♥ A K 4 3 2	♥ 7 5	♥ Q 9 8
♦ K 9 6 4	♦ Q 8	♦ J 10 7 3	♦ A 5 2
♠ A 10 8 5 4	♣ K 9	♣ J 7 2	♣ Q 6 3

As such, after winning with ♥J, cash the ♠Q and come back to hand with ♦A, run the spades, discarding a heart and two clubs in dummy and now cash the ♥K to complete the strip. You can then exit with the ♦Q. North can cash four rounds of hearts but has to lead away from his ♠K to present you with the ninth trick.

Only 4 out of 28 tables made the 3NT contract. Well done to declarers of Bell, Bengal Aces, Friends of Sheep, and especially LTA from the Third Division.

#### Editor’s note:

Interestingly, if North did not overcall, and he led the ♥2 (a falsecard of fourth best lead), would you have employed the end-play strategy, or would you have taken the straightforward approach of playing a club from dummy towards your ♠Q, deeming that it’s “safe” because hearts are 4-3-3-3? At my table, North had the opportunity to relish the moment as he captured the ♠Q with his ♠K, and then smugly cashed his 4 heart tricks, presenting declarer (and dummy!) a nasty surprise. Kudos to Dennis Kow!

#### Ask an Expert!

Tearing your hair off thinking about whether you should have finessed or not on that hand, or if you should have sacrificed over that opponent’s game? Fret not anymore. Email your queries at [expert@bridgeleague.net](mailto:expert@bridgeleague.net) to get them answered.