

South

♠ A 6 3

♥ A J 10 9 4

♦ K J 9 4

♣ 9

On this deal, sitting South was Bruce Bell, best known as New Zealand's "Grand Old Man of Bridge". He was competing in the New Zealand Teams Championship; his side was vulnerable, and the opponents were not.

West was the dealer and opened 1♠. Bell's partner North passed, and East made a natural response of 2NT which shows a balanced hand of about 11-12 points (in their system), inviting opener to game.

With 13 HCP Bell would have opened the bidding as dealer but with his side vulnerable he chose not to bid 3♥ and passed.

West raised to 3NT, everyone passed.

Bell had to choose an opening lead against 3NT and with a good 5 card heart suit there is no need to look elsewhere. With an interior sequence, the standard lead is the J♥, top of the touching cards in the interior sequence.

West (dummy)

♠ K Q 10 8 4

♥ Q 7

♦ A 6

♣ Q 6 5 2

Dummy's Q♥ is played on the J♥, partner plays a low heart and so does declarer. What is going on in the heart suit?

Declarer must have the K♥, and partner's ♥3 is partner's lowest a count signal to show an odd number of cards, three in this case, that means declarer started with three hearts also.

A club from dummy is led. Declarer wins the trick with the K♣ as South follows with the singleton club. Next declarer leads a low spade towards dummy. What card are you playing to this trick? Declarer is obviously trying to establish tricks in the spade suit and you don't want to make things easy for him so you play "second hand low", and declarer plays dummy's Q♣, partner follows with a low spade. What is going on in the spade suit? Again, partner typically gives a count signal in this situation, so it looks like partner is playing low-high to show an odd number of spades, three. Declarer presumably doesn't hold the J♠, otherwise he would have led spades from dummy and simply promoted four winners in the suit. So, it looks like partner has three spades including the jack.

Another club is led from dummy and declarer wins with the A♣.... what are you going to discard on this trick? You want to keep all your hearts so you can defeat the contract if partner can gain the lead and play back a heart, trapping declarer's ♥K. You would also like to keep your low spade, so it seems reasonable to discard a diamond. Let's see what will happen if you do...

Declarer leads the ♠9 toward dummy, and you play low, and dummy's ♠K wins the trick. Declarer leads another spade and partner shows up with the ♠J as expected, unfortunately you have no choice but to win with the Ace. Dummy's last two spades are established as winners. Declarer has already won 5 tricks and dummy's ♦A and ♣Q are also winners in addition to the spades. You can play the ♥A but declarer has 10 tricks, making 3NT with an overtrick.

So how did Bruce Bell manage to defeat the contract?

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

Against East's 3NT contract Bruce Bell also led the ♥J and declarer won the first trick with the ♥Q.

Bell knew from the play it was unlikely declarer held a doubleton ♥K, and since East had shown 11 or 12 HCP, Bell also knew from looking at dummy that his partner could not hold more than a couple of jacks.

Declarer crossed to the East hand with a club and led a low spade towards dummy. Bell played second hand low and dummy's ♠Q won the trick. From declarer's play Bell was pretty sure partner had started with 3 spades, including the ♠J. Declarer now crossed again the East hand with another club, on this trick Bell had to make a discard. He knew he had to find an *entry* to partner's hand so he could lead a heart. What do you think he discarded on this trick?

He discarded the ♠A! Let's see why this was effective.

Declarer didn't have enough tricks without establishing the spade suit. Declarer could lead a spade to dummy's ♠K, but when declarer led a third round of spades, Bell's partner won with the ♠J since Bell no longer held the ace. Bell had created the entry to partner's hand that he needed.

North returned a heart and declarer's ♥K was trapped. When declarer played the ♥K, Bell won with the ace and then took a trick with the ♥10, dropping declarer's last heart. The ♥9 and ♥4 were the 5th tricks for the defence.

The defence took one spade and **four** hearts.

Finding an entry to partners hand is sometimes a problem for both declarer and defenders. Declarer has it a little easier as he can see both hands whereas a defender has to visualise the cards in partner's hand. On this deal Bruce Bell could visualise the only possible entry to partner's hand was the ♠J, and then had to work out a way to turn that into a winner.

Bruce Bell was known as the "Grand Old Man" of NZ bridge, he had boundless enthusiasm for the game and many bridge clubs in NZ owe their origin directly to his efforts. He won the NZ Team Championship eleven times and still holds the record for the most NZ titles. He was one of only half-dozen people who have been honoured by Queen Elizabeth for services to bridge, becoming an Officer of the British Empire in 1979.