

16. Boorish Behavior

Playing in a pairs' event at Hayward, my partner and I are North-South and the round is well-advanced when a husband and wife arrive at our table discussing their last deal in animated tones. With both sides vulnerable, I hold:

♠ K 9 6 2 ♥ A 7 6 ♦ 7 2 ♣ Q 8 6 4

Partner opens a strong **one club**, and East, on my right, passes. I make the book bid of **one notrump**, showing a balanced 8 to 13 points. Partner tries Stayman, and we end in **three notrump**. This was the full auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥ (spades)
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♥Q and partner puts down a threadbare 17-count:

♠ A J 3
♥ K 4 3 2
♦ A Q 8 4
♣ K 7

♥Q led

♠ K 9 6 2
♥ A 7 6
♦ 7 2
♣ Q 8 6 4

Initial impressions?

Despite our 26 points, this is going to be a close affair, particularly after the opponents have gotten off to their best lead. Spades will need to cooperate and at least one of the other suits will have to be friendly. After giving the matter some thought, I decide to duck the first heart and West continues with the ♥8 to my ace, as East discards the ♦5. The spade finesse, ace (West dropping the ♠10), king, and a fourth spade follow in quick succession, with everyone following for three rounds and West discarding the ♣5, dummy the ♦4, and East the ♦3.

What is the view at this stage?

The discards have been revealing. East has parted with two diamonds, echoing along the way. With a known singleton heart and three spades, I am inclined to place him with five or six diamonds. In my experience, the echo tends to show a diamond

value. Although Zia might be trying to talk me out of the diamond finesse, I don't think this particular East fits that description. West's club discard is probably from three or four small, or ace-fourth. In my experience, most good players are reluctant to discard from ace-third early in the hand because this may subject them to an "obligatory finesse"—small to the queen, duck on the way back. *Where do I go for my ninth trick?*

I am going to take East's diamond plays at face value and reject the diamond finesse, although that is the straightforward play and I may end up looking foolish. I think I will play on clubs and hope that East has a concentration of strength in that suit and will be forced to lead diamonds at some stage. I am still considering my options when the wife, on my left, announces urgently: "We are really late," and the husband chimes, "We're not going to finish on time." My blood churns and I hear partner comment in soft, measured tones, "We have plenty of time."

I lead a club to the king and it wins. I stop again for thought. My earlier plan won't work now because West has a sure entry with the ♣A. If she has a second club entry, she can establish the heart suit herself. If she has only one club entry, she can lead a diamond through dummy and my prospects will be hopeless. As I ponder, both defenders visibly become restless although they remain silent. *What now?*

This is the position:

♠ —
♥ K 4
♦ A Q 8
♣ 7

♠ —
♥ 7
♦ 7 2
♣ Q 8 6

It occurs to me that West has three hearts remaining. She is likely to have ♣Ax (because it would have been bad earlier for her to discard a club from ♣A-third). That leaves only one diamond. I cash the ♦A and play the king and another heart. West wins and can take her fifth heart and the ace of clubs and but she has a club left and is forced to give me my ninth trick with the ♣Q.

This was the full deal:

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

Post-Mortem

There are a number of points on this deal. First, it is often good strategy to duck the first trick even with double stoppers. It may sever communications between the defenders, or, as in this case, elicit a revealing early discard from the leader's partner.

Second, East's echo in diamonds was superfluous and counterproductive. It was superfluous because nothing was going to deter West from playing hearts every time she gained the lead. It was counterproductive because instead of passing useful information to partner, the information went to declarer.

Third, West's discard of a low club turned out to be revealing. As explained in the narrative, good players are loath to discard a low card from ace-third because it may expose them to an obligatory finesse. The club discard suggested that West started with four clubs, which along with her five hearts and three spades, left only a singleton diamond.

Fourth, West missed an elementary false card that almost inevitably would have succeeded. In this combination:

<p>♠ Q 10 8</p>	<p>♠ A J 3 ♠ K 9 6 2</p>
<p></p>	<p>♠ 7 5 4</p>

After the jack wins and the ace is cashed, it is mandatory for West to drop the queen, the card she was known to hold. With the hearts five-one, it would be natural for declarer to play East for the spade length and to finesse the ♠9 on the way back.

Finally, it is rude and boorish for defenders to interrupt a declarer when he is considering alternative plays. Aside from the fact that the

defenders created the time limitations by their late arrival, a player is entitled to take a reasonable time to contemplate his play. When the defenders intrude on his thought process by verbally pointing out the time constraints, they gain an unfair competitive advantage.