

The defenders will play:

- a) **fourth best**,
- b) **high** from the doubleton,
- c) **second best** from three and more small cards.
- d) upside down count (hi-lo = odd)

DO NOT BE A
CALF

PAOLO COELHO STORIES

HOW THE PATH WAS OPENED

In “Jornalinho”, in Portugal, I found a story which tells us a lot about the instant choices we make. One day, a calf had to cross a wild forest to return to his grazing land. Being an irrational animal, it picked a difficult path, full of turnings and going up and down hills.

The next day, a dog that was walking in the same area decided to travel along the same path through the forest. Then a sheep that was the leader of his flock came, and when he saw the well-trodden path he made his followers walk along it too.

Later, lots of people started to use this path. They came and went, turned right and left, climbed up and down, avoided obstacles, complaining and cursing; and they were right. But they did nothing to find another way through.

As more people passed along it, the path became wider. The poor animals grew tired carrying heavy loads. They had to walk for three hours on a journey that would have taken only thirty minutes, if they hadn't followed the path opened first by the calf.

Many years passed and the path became the main street of a village and then the main street of a town. Everybody complained about the traffic because the route was the worst possible.

Meanwhile, the old and wise forest laughed at all the people who blindly followed the well-trodden path, without questioning whether it was the best choice.

We make too many mistakes in defence. But even champions make mistakes.

I have often heard the question: "how can I avoid the simple ones?"

Simple mistakes often result from a lack of concentration. There is a remedy for that: there are various techniques that can improve our concentration. Another reason is sheer laziness. We make a superficial judgement relying on our own routine and reflexes. We play like a calf; that is, a slow, awkward, ineffective player dependent on thoughtless routine. How can we eliminate this bad habit? We have to force our mind to continuous mental effort. At the beginning, it will require a considerable effort. After some time, the mental effort will become automatic. This chapter includes 60 defensive problems, in which all calf-like reactions are assigned to myself. It is a useful convention, since the reader should be very satisfied to find a better solution than the author.

CALF IN THE 21ST CENTURY

I would like to present two versions of the same deal.

VERSION 1

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

♠ 8 7 4
♥ Q 10 4 3
♦ 7 5
♣ A 9 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 5
♥ A 9 7 2
♦ K Q J 8 6
♣ 8 7 2

I select the ♣4 for the opening lead. Partner covers with the ♠10 and declarer wins with the king. West plays a diamond to the queen, South dropping the ♦10, and leads a heart to the jack, South following with the ♥8. It looks as if this is a desperate request for a spade return. Having no better option and trying to avoid upsetting my partner I return a spade.

The full hand:

	♠ 8 7 4										
	♥ Q 10 4 3										
	♦ 7 5										
	♣ A 9 6 4										
♠ Q 9 6 3		♠ 5									
♥ K J		♥ A 9 7 2									
♦ A 9 3		♦ K Q J 8 6									
♣ K Q 5 3		♣ 8 7 2									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K J 10 2										
	♥ 8 6 5										
	♦ 10 4 2										
	♣ J 10										

I played like a calf. Why? You will see. South wins with the spade king and returns the jack of clubs. He holds the trick and cleverly plays a diamond. West wins with the ace, plays the king of hearts and enters the dummy with a diamond. Have I planned what to discard on the diamond suit?

Here comes the ending:

	♠ 8										
	♥ 10 4										
	♦ -										
	♣ A										
♠ Q 9		♠ -									
♥ -		♥ A 9									
♦ -		♦ 8									
♣ Q 5		♣ 8									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A J 10										
	♥ 6										
	♦ -										
	♣ -										

I have to discard a spade on the last diamond trick. Declarer throws me in with a club and collects nine tricks.

How should I have defended?

After the heart queen I should have played a diamond to cut declarer's communications. West would win with the ace in his hand, play the king of hearts and enter the dummy with a diamond.

He would arrive at this final position:

	♠ 8 4										
	♥ 10 4										
	♦ -										
	♣ A 9										
♠ Q 9 6		♠ 5									
♥ -		♥ A 9									
♦ -		♦ 8									
♣ Q 5 3		♣ 8 7									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ A K J 10										
	♥ 6										
	♦ -										
	♣ J										

On the last diamond South would discard the ♥6, West the ♣3, and North the ♠4. Check for yourself: there is no winning continuation.

Do I have to know that in advance?

It is enough to realize that declarer will not have three convenient discards on the diamonds he will soon play.

What will be the course of events after a diamond return at the fourth trick?

We may come across a champion, who will answer by cashing the king of hearts and underleading his queen of clubs (instead of playing a diamond to the dummy), thereby cutting the defensive communication.

When South wins the trick with the jack of clubs, declarer produces this ending:

	♠ 8 7 4	
	♥ 10 4	
	♦ —	
	♣ A 9	
♠ Q 9 6 3	N	♠ 5
♥ —	W E	♥ A 9
♦ 9		♦ Q J 8
♣ Q 5	S	♣ 8
	♠ A K J 10 2	
	♥ 6	
	♦ 4	
	♣ —	

1. South can return a diamond (the defence of a calf). West will play three rounds of diamonds and ace of hearts, getting rid of clubs. After playing a spade, he will get a trick with the queen of spades.
2. South can play the spade ace and return a diamond (like a calf). Soon afterwards I will be endplayed.
3. South can play the ace and king of spades and return a diamond (the plan of a wise owl). This is the killing defence since the dummy will be squeezed.

VERSION 2

EW Vulnerable

Teams

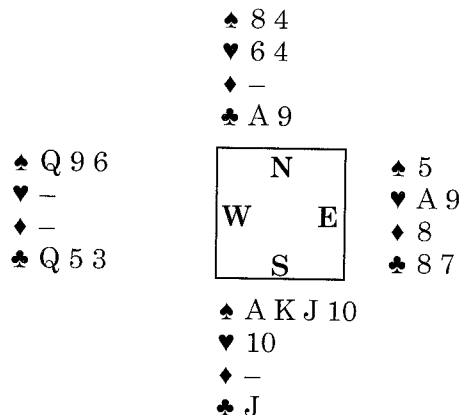
W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

	♠ 8 7 4	
	♥ Q 6 4 3	
	♦ 7 5	
	♣ A 9 6 4	
	N	♠ 5
W E	♥ A 9 7 2	
	♦ K Q J 8 6	
S	♣ 8 7 2	

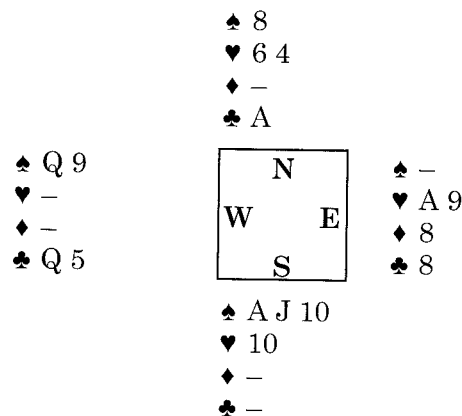
This time I do not have the ten of hearts. I choose the ♣4 for my opening lead. Partner follows with the ♠10 and declarer wins with the king. West plays a diamond to the queen, South following with the ♦10 and plays a heart to the jack, South following with the ♥8.

I remember!!! Yes, after winning the trick with the queen I should return a diamond cutting the communication and...I played like a calf.

This is the final six-card position:



Declarer, who does not have the option of a throw-in, will cash the heart ace and the sight of the ten falling will be just what he needs. Of course, instead of a diamond, I should have played a spade to create this four-card ending:



Now I would let declarer throw me in with the club ace. Two off will be our reward.

Note that if I make a mistake at trick four and return a diamond against a champion declarer, who is good enough to win and underlead his club queen, South may come to the defence's rescue by cashing the spade ace and returning a diamond. Now in the four-card ending I will be 'endplayed' with the club ace to lead hearts.

Difficult, isn't it? Yes, but defensive and declarer play techniques with which even average players are familiar today were a secret wisdom of the very best players forty years ago. In twenty years time such analyses will be a piece of cake.

BE FAIR TO THE CALF 1

It is not always the case that an unsuccessful move can be classified as a mistake. From time to time, it is a matter of a correct guess.

None Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♠*	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♠	All Pass

* – constructive

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

Lead ♠2. I ducked the eight and declarer won the trick, ruffed a heart, drew trumps and claimed 11 tricks.

The full hand:

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

“You are a calf,” said my partner.

One does not have to be so critical of unsuccessful moves. The location of the queen of spades at the first trick was not obvious. It is not so clear-cut that North will have elected to underlead his jack of trumps.

Let us imagine a slightly different card layout.

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

This time we cover the eight with the queen. "You are a calf," our partner will say when declarer plays to ruff the fourth heart and we can no longer overruff!

BE FAIR TO THE CALF 2

Does the failure to find a difficult move mean that one plays like a calf?

All of a sudden, the bidding took off dramatically here.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	6♠	All Pass

Reaching a slam without the use of Blackwood suggests a diamond void in the dummy.

N W E S	♠ J 6 5
	♥ K J 10 7 2
	♦ —
	♣ A K 8 7 2
♠ K 2	
♥ 8 6	
♦ A K 5 4 2	
♣ J 9 5	

Nevertheless, partner made the opening lead of the queen of diamonds. Declarer ruffed and played a spade to the nine. North won with the queen and exited with a spade. West claimed 12 tricks a few moments later.

The full hand:

♠ A 10 9 8 3		♠ Q 7 4
♥ A Q		♥ 9 5 4 3
♦ 10 9 7 3		♦ Q J 8 6
♣ Q 3		♣ 10 4
	N W E S	
		♠ J 6 5
		♥ K J 10 7 2
		♦ —
		♣ A K 8 7 2
		♠ K 2
		♥ 8 6
		♦ A K 5 4 2
		♣ J 9 6 5

There were two solutions to this very difficult problem.

1. North could have ducked the queen of spades. West would have ruffed a diamond, entered his hand with the ace of hearts, and cashed the spade ace. He would then have had to guess in which suit the holder of the spade honour had at least three cards: in hearts or in clubs?
2. I should have played the king on the first round of spades. You can check for yourself that West would now be helpless.

In what situation will playing the king of spades on the second round be bad for the defence?

a) If declarer has the following hand:

♠ A Q x x x
♥ A Q
♦ x x x
♣ x x x

In this deal, declarer will manage an overtrick when we could have held him to 12 tricks.

b) With the hand below:

♠ A Q x x x
♥ A x x
♦ x x x
♣ Q x

Playing the king on the second round will make declarer's life easier.

However, rising with the king is not an easy manoeuvre and the calf can be forgiven.

BE FAIR TO THE CALF 3

There are hands in which it is almost impossible to make a sensible analysis.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

N	♠ A
W	♥ 9 2
E	♦ Q 10 8 6 3
S	♣ A K J 10 5

♠ 9 8 6 4 3
♥ A K 5
♦ K J 9
♣ 9 2

Lead ♠Q. Declarer takes this with the ace and plays the ♥9. I duck. All of the players I tested ducked without giving it a second thought. The reason was obvious: we need partner on lead to play through the diamond queen. The problem is that we have to duck at a natural tempo, which prevents a thorough analysis. Declarer most likely has two spades and six hearts. Why two spades? Because he did not play to ruff spades in the dummy. Let us consider two possible hand shapes:

a) 2-6-2-3

The defenders counted on a hand like this:

♠ K 2
♥ Q 10 8 6 4 3
♦ A 5
♣ Q 4 2

This is the West hand where ducking the heart at an even tempo will set the game. Still, there is an argument against ducking: a jump in a suit usually promises a slightly better suit than this. What options do we have?

b) 2-6-3-2

If this is the distribution we can disrupt declarer's communications, regardless of whether our partner has a heart honour.

Here comes the full deal:

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

N	♠ A
W	♥ 9 2
E	♦ Q 10 8 6 3
S	♣ A K J 10 5

♠ 9 8 6 4 3
♥ A K 5
♦ K J 9
♣ 9 2

I can rise with a trump honour at the second trick and play a club, win the heart continuation and play on clubs again.

Summing up:

- a) Against a 2 – 6 – 2 – 3 West distribution, we have to find a heart honour with our partner.
- b) Against a 2 – 6 – 3 – 2 West distribution, we can always set the game by cutting the communication.

The distributions are similar, and there is no evidence to suggest that one is more likely than the other. Therefore it is much better to play to cut declarer's communication.

Of course, declarer may have seven hearts, but then there is no chance to beat the contract.

CALF AT THE HEIGHT OF FAME

The calf rose to the height of its ability. It created a false impression as to his side's honour location.

EW Vulnerable

Teams

W	N	E	S
			1♦
Pass	Pass	Dbl	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

N
W E
S

♠ A K J 10
♥ K J 10 9
♦ 10 5 2
♣ J 5

♠ 8 7 4
♥ Q 6 3
♦ A K Q 6
♣ K 8 4

After the ♦7 opening lead I cashed three diamond tricks. On the third round of diamonds partner discarded a club. I exited with the king of clubs. Declarer, misguided by this move, finessed North for the queen of hearts. One can hardly blame him for that: I had already shown 14 points (being marked with the ♣KQ, along with the ♦AKQ) and our 1NT opening promises 15 – 17 points. Result: one off.

The full hand:

	♠ A 6 3										
	♥ 6										
	♦ K J 8 5 3										
	♣ 6 4 3 2										
♠ K 9 4 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K Q J 9 7 5		♥ A 10 8 2									
♦ 10		♦ A 9									
♣ Q 10		♣ A J 9 8									
	♠ Q J 10										
	♥ 4 3										
	♦ Q 7 6 4 2										
	♣ K 7 5										

“Wake up and rise with the queen,” I rebuke myself rather too late. Why?

Declarer discarded a club on the ♦9 and secured the contract regardless of the location of the club king and spade ace. Now the safe ruffing finesse in clubs brings the contract home.

TRANSPARENT

The old cow thinks she was never a calf.

“Make your play clear,” we often hear our partner say. This is not a suggestion we should follow every time.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣*	Pass	1♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – may be short

♠ 7 5																		
♥ Q 9 3																		
♦ J 10 4																		
♣ K Q J 5 3																		
<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		<table><tr><td>♠ J 9 8</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>♥ K 10 4</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>♦ A 8 6 3</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>♣ 6 4 2</td><td></td></tr></table>	♠ J 9 8		♥ K 10 4		♦ A 8 6 3		♣ 6 4 2	
	N																	
W		E																
	S																	
♠ J 9 8																		
♥ K 10 4																		
♦ A 8 6 3																		
♣ 6 4 2																		

I lead the ♣K and continue the suit. Declarer wins the third round, partner discarding a spade, then crosses to the dummy with the heart king and plays a diamond. South follows with the nine and declarer wins in hand with the queen. On the next diamond trick I play the ten, indicating heart values; declarer ducks and our partner wins with the king. Declarer claims nine tricks.

Here comes the full deal:

	♠ 7 5										
	♥ Q 9 3										
	♦ J 10 4										
	♣ K Q J 5 3										
♠ A K Q		♠ J 9 8									
♥ A 6 5		♥ K 10 4									
♦ Q 7 5 2		♦ A 8 6 3									
♣ A 10 9		♣ 6 4 2									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 6 4 3 2										
	♥ J 8 7 2										
	♦ K 9										
	♣ 8 7										

The hand is worth a careful analysis. When the Professor (who examines our mistakes) gets to review the deal, this is what he says.

“I shall discuss the tricks in order of appearance”:

- Trick 1: Everybody played correctly.
- Trick 2: Declarer, West, made a mistake: he should have won the club ace on the second round of clubs.
- Trick 3: South, as a defender, now had the chance to discard the king of diamonds on the third round of clubs.
- Trick 4: West did the right thing by entering the dummy with the heart king and underleading his ace of diamonds.

Why? Entering the dummy with the ace of diamonds would have created another opportunity for South to unblock his king.

- Trick 5: South did a good job as a defender by ducking with the doubleton king of diamonds.

Trick 6: North played like a calf. He should have played the jack on the second round of diamonds, suggesting the following layout:

	♠ 7 5 2										
	♥ Q 9 3										
	♦ J 4										
	♣ K Q J 5 3										
♠ A K Q		♠ J 9 8									
♥ A 6 5		♥ K 10 4									
♦ Q 7 5 2		♦ A 8 6 3									
♣ A 10 9		♣ 6 4 2									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 6 4 3										
	♥ J 8 7 2										
	♦ K 10 9										
	♣ 8 7										

Now if declarer ducks the jack of diamonds he will go down.

CONCEITED CALF

Unjustified self-confidence is a feature typical of conceited calves.

None Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 5
♥ A 7 6
♦ 7 6 5 4
♣ A 10 9 2

♠ K J 8 6 3
♥ 8 5
♦ Q 10 8 3
♣ J 5

Lead ♥J. West wins with the king and plays a spade to the queen. I win the trick and exit with the diamond three. Partner wins the declarer's king with the ace and switches back to hearts. It would have been better to keep playing diamonds but North was not sure of the diamond layout (he could not see the ♦2). West wins with the ace in the dummy and plays a spade to the nine, North discarding a heart. Declarer exits with a diamond, partner following with the nine. I am trying to concentrate. Declarer's hand is an open book:

♠ A 10 9 x x
♥ K Q x
♦ K x
♣ K x x

He is left with these cards:

♠ A 10 x
♥ K
♦ —
♣ K x x

If I overtake the nine of diamonds and cash my two established diamond tricks declarer will be squeezed.

- If he discards two spades, I will return a spade and wait for a club trick.
- If he discards a spade and a club I will exit with a club and wait for a spade trick.

I played accordingly.

Here comes the full deal:

		♠ 7									
		♥ J 10 9 3 2									
		♦ A J 9									
		♣ Q 8 6 4									
♠ A 10 9 4 2											
♥ K Q 4											
♦ K 2											
♣ K 7 3											
	<table> <tr> <td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 5 ♥ A 7 6 ♦ 7 6 5 4 ♣ A 10 9 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ K J 8 6 3									
		♥ 8 5									
		♦ Q 10 8 3									
		♣ J 5									

On the last diamond, declarer discarded the queen of hearts!!!

This was the final position:

	♠ —										
	♥ 9										
	♦ —										
	♣ Q 8 6 4										
♠ A 10	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ 7									
♦ —		♦ —									
♣ K 7 3		♣ A 10 9 2									
	♠ J 8 6										
	♥ —										
	♦ —										
	♣ J 5										

There was nothing I could do.

- If I played a spade, partner would be squeezed in hearts and clubs.
- If I played the jack of clubs, the situation would be similar.

The result – one off – scored only 27%. Why? The contract was typical, but some declarers failed by two tricks. It would have been enough to duck partner's nine of diamonds. Then a third heart by partner prevents this position from arising. On the third heart I would have discarded a spade and in this final position:

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

Declarer wouldn't have come to eight tricks. I had not foreseen the excellent discard of the heart queen by declarer. My self-confidence had put me off the right track.

* – natural game forcing

[illegible]

♠ 10 9 8 6 5 2

1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

2. The second occasion would have required a lot of imagination on defence. These cards were alive after the first three tricks:

	♠ 9 8 6 5 2										
	♥ 4										
	♦ J										
	♣ K 10 2										
♠ A K 3	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 9		♥ 10 5									
♦ 8		♦ A K 7 6									
♣ Q 8 6 4		♣ J 7 5									
	♠ —										
	♥ J 8 6 3										
	♦ Q 10 5										
	♣ A 9 3										

West plays the jack of clubs, partner rises with the ace and North should follow promptly with the ten. South plays a diamond to the king. Declarer will cash the diamond ace, discarding a spade from his hand, finesse a heart and give up a club trick. Due to North's unblocking the ♣10, South will win the trick and the established diamond will be the setting trick. You may say that the ♣10 discard gives declarer the opportunity to bring the contract home by finessing the ♠9. True, but following promptly with the ten of clubs suggests that North holds ♠K 10 9.

CALF – NOT A FLY 2

The calf is always wise after the event.

None Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
			1♦
3♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

♠ A Q 7 2																		
♥ 7 2																		
♦ 10 8 2																		
♣ Q J 4 3																		
<table><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		<table><tr><td>♠ J</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>♥ Q J 10 3</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>♦ J 6 4</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>♣ K 8 7 6 5</td><td></td></tr></table>	♠ J		♥ Q J 10 3		♦ J 6 4		♣ K 8 7 6 5	
	N																	
W		E																
	S																	
♠ J																		
♥ Q J 10 3																		
♦ J 6 4																		
♣ K 8 7 6 5																		

Lead ♦8. Partner carefully collected the trick with the queen, continued with the king and declarer ruffed the third round of diamonds with the ♠3. The sequence of diamonds played by partner indicated club values. I rose with the queen on declarer's lead of the ♠4 and played through dummy's king of clubs, declarer ducking in dummy. On the second round of clubs declarer ruffed with the ♠8 and played the king of spades. I won with the ace, partner discarding a heart. A club was ruffed with ♠9 and ...on the fourth round of trumps declarer played the ♠5, throwing me in with the seven!

The full hand:

	♠ A Q 7 2										
	♥ 7 2										
	♦ 10 8 2										
	♣ Q J 4 3										
♠ K 10 9 8 5 4 3	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 8 6		♥ Q J 10 3									
♦ 9 5		♦ J 6 4									
♣ 2		♣ K 8 7 6 5									
	♠ 6										
	♥ K 9 5 4										
	♦ A K Q 7 3										
	♣ A 10 9										

I forgot to unblock the seven of spades. In the four-card ending I won a trump trick but that was all I could get.

	♠ 7										
	♥ 7 2										
	♦ -										
	♣ J										
♠ 5	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ -
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 8 6		♥ Q J 10									
♦ -		♦ -									
♣ -		♣ K									
	♠ -										
	♥ K 9										
	♦ 7 3										
	♣ -										

Result: two off. +300 was worth only 7%. Had I have kept the two of trumps, partner would have cashed two tricks.

	♠ 2										
	♥ 7 2										
	♦ -										
	♣ J										
♠ 5	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ -
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 8 6		♥ Q J 10									
♦ -		♦ -									
♣ -		♣ K									
	♠ -										
	♥ K 9										
	♦ 7 3										
	♣ -										

Result: three off. +500 would have scored 93%. Why such a big difference in the score? We could have made 3NT easily. Results of nine or ten tricks in 3NT were quite popular on the travelling score. How was it possible to take only nine tricks? After a spade opening lead North finessed clubs twice without cashing the ace of spades, stranding a trick in the dummy. After cashing the diamond winners East won a heart trick and established a club. This way declarer did not get a trick with the spade ace.

CALF – NOT A FLY 3

Take an active part in the game. I know how often we think that there is nothing we can do. Still, on many boards this is not true.

I opened a weak two in first position and the bidding took off immediately:

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			2♥
Dbl	3♣	Pass	5♣
5♠	6♣	6♠	All Pass

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

Lead ♥2. Declarer wins the jack with the ace and draws trumps in four rounds. Partner follows each time and I discard three small hearts. Declarer plays a diamond to the queen and a club. I show the count and to my surprise, declarer discards a diamond.

Here is the full deal:

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

I played like a calf. The diamonds were blocked and my only responsibility was to rise with the club queen. Of course, West could make the contract if after winning the diamond queen he had finessed the jack... but why would he?

CALF – NOT A FLY 4

Routine subdues creativity.

EW Vulnerable

Match

W	N	E	S
1NT*	2♦**	Dbl	2♠
Pass	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – 12 – 14

** – At least 5 – 4 in the majors

N	♠ A 6 4
W	♥ A 10 3 2
E	♦ A 2
S	♣ Q 5 3 2
♠ 9 8 3	
♥ –	
♦ K Q 8 7 6 3	
♣ J 10 8 7	

Partner selected the opening lead of the king of spades and followed with the queen, West ducking twice as I followed with the nine (showing an odd number) and 8♠ (which indicated diamond values). Partner dutifully played a diamond and West ducked again. After winning the diamond trick with the queen I continued the suit and...

Here comes the layout:

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

Declarer played the ace of clubs, king of hearts and jack of hearts, ducking the queen and arriving at this end position:

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

After winning a trick with the heart queen North exited with a spade, West discarding a club. On the first round of hearts I can discard a diamond, but what next? How else could I have defended this hand?

After winning the queen of diamonds a spade return would have broken up the diamond-club squeeze. Why? Declarer can no longer duck the queen of hearts because North has two established spade winners.

CALF – NOT AN OWL 1

Thoughtlessness is the regular state for most defenders, not the exception.

A competitive auction quickly climbed to the five-level.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣	2♥	3♣	3♠
Dbl	4♠	5♣	All Pass

N	♠ K
W E	♥ 9 4 3
S	♦ 8 5 4
	♣ Q J 10 9 8 2
♠ A Q J 10 6 3	
♥ 5	
♦ J 9 8 2	
♣ 5 4	

Lead ♥K. Declarer won with the ace and drew two rounds of trumps, partner discarding a heart on the second round. Declarer then played four rounds of diamonds ruffing in the dummy, North following suit for two rounds, and then gave up a spade trick. Partner signalled to show an even number of spades, which was obvious from the bidding and the play thus far. After winning the spade ace, I exited safely with the queen of spades.

Here is the deal:

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

Was the ♠Q really a safe return? Declarer will discard a heart and now a ruff and discard will bring the contract home. The only defensive chance is to find the ♠9 with our partner. After winning a trick with the spade ace I should have played a small spade back. North will win the trick, and now discarding a heart no longer helps declarer.

CALF - NOT AN OWL 2

Even if a good idea occurs to the calf, he will not think it through.

The bidding climbed too high. I did not really know what to do with my two aces. Should I double?

EW Vulnerable Teams

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2NT*	Pass
3♠	Pass	4♥	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

* – game forcing with heart support

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 9 8 7 4

♥ 8

♦ A 5 4

♣ Q 6 4 3

♠ K

♥ Q 6 5 4

♦ Q 10 3

♣ A K 7 5 2

The jack of clubs opening lead was not exactly what I wanted. Declarer ruffed and played the heart ace and a heart to the queen, partner following with the ten and jack of hearts. Declarer ruffed a second club and crossed to dummy with a heart. He then discarded three diamonds, including the $\spadesuit$ K, on the established clubs. Is all lost?

No, not if the calf makes a thorough analysis. Declarer's distribution is clear: 4 – 6 – 3 – 0. In the final position, he has only one trump left. You have to duck the king of spades.

Here is the full deal:

	♠ 10 6 3										
	♥ J 10										
	♦ J 7 6 2										
	♣ J 10 9 8										
♠ Q J 4 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K 9 7 3 2		♥ Q 6 5 4									
♦ K 9 8		♦ Q 10 3									
♣ —		♣ A K 7 5 2									
	♠ A 9 8 7 4										
	♥ 8										
	♦ A 5 4										
	♣ Q 6 4 3										

This is the ending:

♠ Q J 4 2		♠ 10 6	
♥ 9		♥ —	
♦ —		♦ J 7 6	
♣ —		♣ —	
			</

If I duck the king of spades declarer will next play a diamond, discarding a spade, and partner will be put in an awkward position. Returning a spade would establish the queen of spades in declarer's hand. Exiting with a diamond is much better. West might misguess the diamond position, which is the best we can hope for. The main thing is whether we stayed cool during the course of the bidding and play.

In this case, the calf produced a partial analysis but did not think through the whole deal. It would have been correct to keep three spades and two diamonds. Of course, partner should keep three diamonds and two spades.

	♠ 10										
	♥ —										
	♦ J 7 6										
	♣ —										
♠ Q J 4	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9		♥ 6									
♦ —		♦ Q 10 3									
♣ —		♣ —									
	♠ A 9										
	♥ —										
	♦ A 5										
	♣ —										

As we can see, there is nothing declarer can do in this ending. He has to play a low diamond. North, after winning the trick, will exit with a spade, and declarer has no winning option.

CALF – NOT AN OWL 3

It is strange how easily the majority of experienced players put themselves in the calf's position. Here they thought that their play was irrelevant.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2NT*	Pass
4♠**	All Pass		

- * – game forcing with spade support
 ** – Sub-minimum (with or without shortage)

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

I lead the ♣J. My jack won the trick and I continued clubs. West ruffed and cashed the ace and king of spades, South following suit. Declarer then played the ♦Q to the ace, ruffed a club, and led the jack of diamonds. I analysed the distribution of the declarer as 5 – 4 – 3 – 1 and decided to withhold the queen of spades. By the fourth round of diamonds I did not like at all what was happening, but it was already too late.

Here is the full deal:

♠ A K 9 5 2		♠ Q 6 3									
♥ J 7 4 2		♥ A 10 9 8 6 3									
♦ Q J 8		♦ 2									
♣ 2		♣ J 10 8									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 8 7 ♥ Q 6 ♦ A K 10 9 3 ♣ K 7 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ 9 4									
		♥ K									
		♦ 8 7 5 4									
		♣ A Q 9 6 4 3									

West reeled off the diamond suit. Ruffing in on the fourth or fifth round would not help much: the hearts were blocked. Whether I ruffed the ninth, tenth, or eleventh trick, partner would then win his singleton king of hearts and have to concede a ruff and sluff. I should have ruffed the second or third round of diamonds and played a heart to unblock the suit (I would be free from the endplay). Partner could then exit with a diamond.

CALF – NOT AN OWL 4

Before you win a trick, consider whether it might be better to duck it.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♦*	Pass
2NT**	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – game forcing check back.

** – exactly 2 hearts

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 7
♥ Q 8 6 5
♦ A 7 4
♣ K J 5

♠ K
♥ A K 4 3 2
♦ K 6 5 2
♣ 7 6 2

Lead ♠10. I unblock the queen. Declarer plays a diamond to the queen and continues with the jack; partner signals club values by playing the ♦9 and ♦10. I win with the diamond ace and play the jack of spades. West ducks. I pause to consider my next move and...

The full hand:

	♠ 10 9 8 6 4 2										
	♥ 10 9										
	♦ 10 9										
	♣ Q 10 4										
♠ A 5 3		♠ K									
♥ J 7		♥ A K 4 3 2									
♦ Q J 8 3		♦ K 6 5 2									
♣ A 9 8 3		♣ 7 6 2									
	<table> <tr> <td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q J 7										
	♥ Q 8 6 5										
	♦ A 7 4										
	♣ K J 5										

I know that I played like a calf here. I knew every single card in declarer's hand.

♠ A x x
♥ J x
♦ Q J 8 3
♣ A x x x

What defensive options did I have?

- If I continue with spades, West will win, overtake the ♦8 with the king and play a heart to the jack. The six of diamonds provides the vital entry to the dummy.
- If I switch to clubs, declarer will duck twice and collect nine tricks.

Of course, I should have ducked the jack of diamonds, which would have cut declarer's communication.

CALF – NOT A FOX

This time, I am playing in a match.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT*	Pass	3NT	All Pass

* – good hand

♠ 8 6 3
♥ 9 7
♦ K 10 9 5 4
♣ Q 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 7 5 2
♥ 2
♦ A 7 6
♣ A K 10 9 6 2

Lead ♦10. Partner wins the trick with the queen and returns a diamond. Declarer ducks and I continue the suit, partner discarding a heart. West enters his hand with the spade ace, South following with the ♠4, indicating an even number of spades, and plays a club to the nine in the dummy.

The full hand:

♠ A K 10	♠ 8 6 3	♠ 7 5 2									
♥ A K 10 6 3	♥ 9 7	♥ 2									
♦ J 8 3	♦ K 10 9 5 4	♦ A 7 6									
♣ 8 5	♣ Q 4 3	♣ A K 10 9 6 2									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q J 9 4										
	♥ Q J 8 5 4										
	♦ Q 2										
	♣ J 5										

Result: 10 tricks.

“Do not be a calf, rise with the queen of clubs,” I chastise myself. Declarer has five hearts, three diamonds and three spades so there is room for only two clubs in his hand. I could have put West in a difficult situation. He could not duck the club queen as I had two established diamond winners. If he crosses back to his hand and finesses clubs again I shall have achieved my goal. If he plays clubs from the top it will cost me an overtrick – but it is worth the chance to set the contract.

AUTOMATIC 2

Socrates believed that we have to be aware of what we know and what we do not. To make it more simple, we have to know when being too careful doesn't pay.

None Vulnerable

Teams

W	N	E	S
4♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♥*	Pass	6♠	All Pass

* – 2 keycards without the ♠Q (RKC Blackwood)

♠ 8 2
♥ Q J 10 5
♦ Q 10 6 2
♣ Q 7 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 4
♥ A K 9 8 7 3
♦ A
♣ K 9 8 5

Lead ♥Q. Declarer won, played two rounds of trumps and a heart. I carefully played the ten...

The full hand:

♠ A K J 10 7 6 5		♠ 8 2									
♥ 4 2		♥ Q J 10 5									
♦ K 7 5		♦ Q 10 6 2									
♣ 4		♣ Q 7 2									
	<table> <tr> <td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 4 ♥ A K 9 8 7 3 ♦ A ♣ K 9 8 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ 9 3									
		♥ 6									
		♦ J 9 8 4 3									
		♣ A J 10 6 3									

West covered the ten with the king, then played the ♥9 and discarded a club. How would I know that he had only one club? The line of play seemed to indicate a 7 – 2 – 2 – 2 distribution: West did not try to ruff a diamond.

Not until later did I realise that declarer lacked the communication to ruff a diamond.

Actually, there was nothing to be afraid of. Yes, inserting the heart ten prevents declarer from taking a deep finesse, but the deep heart finesse is not a play you should be worried about declarer finding. The odds are heavily on a 3-2 distribution in hearts. (Additionally declarer might reason that with a 4-1 break, the majority of players would play the ten, so that is not the lie of the cards). An additional argument is that an unsuccessful deep finesse will see declarer go down in ridiculous fashion. Additionally, with hearts breaking 4-1, West has one more chance to make his slam, that of the ace of clubs being onside. True, if the opening lead of the queen of hearts was made without thought and North hesitated before playing the five, I would consider taking a deep finesse in hearts. This is another good

reason for defenders to be aware that they should try not to give anything away by their tempo, whether it be playing too fast or too slow.

AUTOMATIC 3

I have seen more than one “automatic” play from excellent players.

A moment of reflection would have prevented the mistake, but their analysis is often belated.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

N	♠ 10 5
W E	♥ A J 5
S	♦ J 10 8 2
	♣ A Q J 9
♠ Q 6 4 3 2	
♥ Q 10 8 6	
♦ 5	
♣ 10 8 6	

Lead ♠7. Declarer plays the ♠10. I automatically cover with the queen.

Here is the full deal:

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

Sound analysis is obligatory – even in situations where one's play appears to be forced.

Partner has 7-8 points. In spades he may hold:

- | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|
| a) A K 8 7 | d) A J 9 7 | g) A 9 8 7 |
| b) A K 9 7 | e) K J 8 7 | |
| c) A J 8 7 | f) K J 9 7 | |

The location of the spade queen is irrelevant to the fate of the contract.

In c), d), and g), ducking will defeat the game if declarer does not have nine ready tricks.

In a), b), e), and f), ducking will give away an overtrick.

In a pairs tournament, you would have a real problem here. However at teams it is far more likely that with holdings a) or b) partner would lead the ace so ducking the queen is the indicated play.

AUTOMATIC 4

Some are interested in exceptions, others in rules. Which is more important? The calf applies rules instilled by his first bridge teachers consistently, and regardless of the context.

Our next board features a long and complicated auction.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
5♥*	Pass	5NT	Pass
6♣**	Pass	7NT	All Pass

- * – inquiry about number of kings
** grand slam invitational

♠ K 6 3	
♥ J 10 8 4	
♦ 7 4	
♣ Q J 10 7	
N W E S	♠ A 10 8
	♥ A Q 7 5 3
	♦ K J
	♣ K 3 2

On the opening lead of the ♣Q, declarer won in his hand with the ace (partner signalling an even number of clubs) and checked the heart distribution. On the third round of hearts partner and

declarer followed with small spades. The king of diamonds was overtaken with the ace and the spade queen appeared on the table.

What was going on? To be safe, I covered the queen with the king.

Here comes the full board:

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

The problem is not easy. I should not have relaxed but have taken advantage of declarer's reflection and made my own analysis. Six diamonds, two clubs, three hearts and the spade ace make a total of twelve tricks. A spade finesse or a double squeeze might provide the thirteenth trick. The spade queen was played with the intention of checking where the king was. I should follow with a small spade in normal tempo. The slightest hesitation would give away the location of the king. If I play low smoothly, declarer will probably overtake the queen with the ace to arrive at this end position:

	♠ K	
	♥ J	
	♦ -	
	♣ Q	
♠ J	NE WS	♠ -
♥ -		♥ 7
♦ 10		♦ -
♣ 6		♣ K 3
	♠ 9	
	♥ -	
	♦ -	
	♣ 9 8	

If South held the spade king there would be a classic double squeeze. As the cards lie, there is no squeeze.

AUTOMATIC 5

The bidding was swift here, but I still managed to acquire some information about opener's hand.

None Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	2NT*	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

* – game forcing with heart support

Partner made the opening lead of the ♠J, declarer ducking. With K J 10, we lead the jack. Somewhat surprised I followed with the ♠6. Partner continued the attack on spades.

Automatic 5

The full hand:

♠ J 5
 ♥ 7 3
 ♦ A J 9 4
 ♣ Q 8 6 5 2

♠ 7 3
 ♥ K Q 9 8 2
 ♦ K 8 5
 ♣ A J 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 9 4
 ♥ A J 10 6 5
 ♦ 7 2
 ♣ 4 3

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

At the second trick, West won the ♠A, drew trumps in two rounds and played a club to the ten. There was nothing North could do. I had screwed up the defence at the first trick.

My reasoning should have been as follows:

1. Declarer must have some reason to give up on the chance of North having the K J 10.
2. Considering his jump to 4♥, West is most likely to be minimum and completely balanced.
3. Ducking the jack of spades represents an attempt to keep the dangerous opponent off lead. Declarer probably wants to prevent me from playing through his diamond holding. The defence I should have found was to overtake the jack of spades and play the diamond ten. Will the extra spade trick allow the contract to make? With West's distribution being 2 – 5 – 3 – 3, one discard will not help.

AUTOMATIC 6

Meekness and passivity in bridge are not the way to victory. There is no excuse for failing to think, even with poor cards.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2NT*	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♠**	Pass	6♠	All Pass

* – extra values

** – 2 keycards with the ♠Q (RKC Blackwood)

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

Opening lead ♥Q. I signal an odd number of cards in the suit. Declarer cashes the ace of spades, shattering my hopes for a trick, but he does not look too happy about it. After much thought, he plays the ace of clubs, a club to the king in the dummy and a small club. I follow with the ten, ruffed by West. Time to ruff a heart in the dummy. Declarer continues with three rounds of diamonds to arrive at this end position:

♠ J 9 7		
♥ –		
♦ –		
♣ –		
♠ Q 10 6	N	♠ 8
♥ –	W	♥ –
♦ –	E	♦ K
♣ –	S	♣ J
♠ –		
♥ 10 8		
♦ –		
♣ Q		

Our endplayed partner had to lead into the spade tenace. Bad luck, we think, to come across such excellent declarer play.

Here is the full deal:

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

How seldom we notice when we have played like a calf. What did I do wrong?

On the third club trick I should have followed with the queen. From the point of view of declarer, the position could have been different.

	♠ J 9 7	
	♥ —	
	♦ —	
	♣ 10	
♠ Q 10 6	N W E S	♠ 8
♥ —		♥ —
♦ 8		♦ K Q
♣ —		♣ J
	♠ —	
	♥ 10 8	
	♦ 9 6	
	♣ —	

From his viewpoint, the only sensible move would now be to discard on the club jack. And he would have a nasty surprise!

AUTOMATIC 7

A simple problem runs into routine defence and thus an inferior sequence of defensive plays

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2NT	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

	N W E S	♠ 9 6 5
		♥ Q 9 5
		♦ K Q J 10 2
		♣ 5 2
♠ J 10 4 3		
♥ K 10 2		
♦ A 6 5		
♣ J 7 4		

Lead ♥3. Declarer plays the five and I automatically follow with the ten. Even before West wins with the ace I know I have played like a calf.

Here is the deal:

	♠ 8 7										
	♥ J 6 4 3										
	♦ 9 7 3										
	♣ K Q 9 6										
♠ A K Q 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 8 7		♥ Q 9 5									
♦ 8 4		♦ K Q J 10 2									
♣ A 10 8 3		♣ 5 2									
	♠ J 10 4 3										
	♥ K 10 2										
	♦ A 6 5										
	♣ J 7 4										

I have created an entry to the dummy. Declarer will have to guess the heart layout, but had I played the deuce on the first trick West would not have had any chance. If after following with the ♥2 I duck the diamond only once (which should not be difficult after partner signals count) I can beat the contract by two tricks. At the table declarer won the ten of hearts with the ace and gave up a diamond trick. I ducked once as partner signalled count, won the diamond continuation and, following partner's signals (♦3 on the second round of diamonds, low suit preference), returned the jack of clubs. West ducked clubs twice, won the third round and played a heart to the nine. How did he uncover the heart distribution?

He knew that the fourth club was with North. After my poor play of the heart ten, all was still not yet lost. I should have concealed the club distribution.

Let's assume that after winning the ace of diamonds I return the ♣4 and my partner cooperates beautifully by winning with the nine and playing the queen, then the six. This way North simulates a different club layout:

N: ♣ Q 9 6 S: ♣ K J 7 4

Therefore declarer would place the club king with South, leading to a misguess in hearts. This excellent defence would have beaten the contract three tricks.

Let's imagine a different layout, in which I have switched the hearts and clubs.

	♠ 8 7										
	♥ K 6 4 3										
	♦ 9 7 3										
	♣ K Q 6 3										
♠ A K Q 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 8 7		♥ Q 9 5									
♦ 8 4		♦ K Q J 10 2									
♣ A 10 9 8		♣ 5 2									
	♠ J 10 4 3										
	♥ J 10 2										
	♦ A 6 5										
	♣ J 7 4										

Lead ♥3. Declarer plays the five, and I automatically play the ten. I know that it would have been better to play the jack. I would have increased the chances of putting declarer off track in guessing the heart honours.

Still, these types of manoeuvres are rarely successful. Why? The key is that partner is also misled. Let us follow the course of events if I play the jack of hearts at the first trick. West wins with the ace and plays a diamond back. We win the second round and return a club. On the second round of clubs, declarer wins the club ace and plays a heart. North can't see why he should duck. More than that, he needs to duck without giving it a second thought.

So how, as South, can we persuade partner to find this smooth duck? Maybe by playing a Smith Echo or using the ♦6 as heart suit preference? North should be able to reason out that I cannot have a spade honour: after all, there are only 40 points in a deck of cards.

I strongly approve of thinking about these issues in advance and agreeing an approach with your partner. I think that bridge analysis will gradually evolve in this direction, to address questions of this sort.

AUTOMATIC 8

This chapter might be entitled: "Calf – Not a Chess Player."

None Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			3♦
4♣	Pass	4♦	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♣	All Pass

N	♠ A K Q 8 4
W	♥ K Q 7 5 3
E	♦ A 2
S	♣ J
♠ 8 3 2	
♥ 2	
♦ K Q J 9 7 3	
♣ 6 5 2	

Lead ♦10. West wins with the ace and comes to his hand with the heart ace, then plays a spade to the dummy. On the second round of spades, declarer discards a diamond. He next plays the king of hearts. I ruff and declarer overruffs and plays the trump ace. Now declarer cashes the club ace and partner begins to think...

Here comes the full board:

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

This is the final position:

	♠ J 9	
	♥ J 10 9 6	
	♦ —	
	♣ K 9	
♠ —	N WE S	♠ A 8 4
♥ —		♥ Q 7 5
♦ 8 6		♦ 2
♣ A Q 10 8 7 4		♣ J
	♠ 6	
	♥ —	
	♦ K Q J 9 7	
	♣ 6 5	

Partner discards the club king on the ace, but unfortunately he has met his equal. West plays the ♣8 and my partner must win the trick. I congratulate both players on the excellent duel.

Of course, I had not noticed that I played like a calf. Declarer's shape, 1 – 1– 4 – 7, was obvious not only from the course of the bidding but also from his line of play. Partner must have a trump trick for us to stand a chance. If it is the ace my play is irrelevant; with the trump king, though, the defence requires more care to avoid the throw-in. I should have restrained myself from ruffing the heart honour and instead discarded a spade. The final position would have been somewhat different:

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

This time I will ruff whichever top honour West chooses to play. When my partner gets in, he will now be able to lead the suit, in which dummy holds no top honours, and I get a diamond winner at trick 13.

AUTOMATIC 9

What could I have done here? Answer: produce a more careful analysis.

Here opener was not blessed with discipline, and he misjudged the position. A 3NT contract would have been easy to make.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

♠ J 7 5 4
♥ 4
♦ A 10 6 3
♣ J 9 8 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 6
♥ K Q 10 8 2
♦ K Q 9
♣ A 7 5 2

Lead ♥4. South wins the queen with the ace and returns the ♣10. Declarer wins the trick in the dummy, then plays a spade to the queen and cashes the spade ace, partner following with the king. On the third round of spades I take the ♠10 with the jack, South discarding the ♥5. What should I do next? Cash the ace of diamonds? I play a club and...

Here comes the full hand:

♠ J 7 5 4
♥ 4
♦ A 10 6 3
♣ J 9 8 3

♠ A Q 10 9 8 3
♥ 3
♦ J 8
♣ K Q 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 6
♥ K Q 10 8 2
♦ K Q 9
♣ A 7 5 2

♠ K 2
♥ A J 9 7 6 5
♦ 7 5 4 2
♣ 10

Is there anything to be done?

I could have produced an accurate analysis instead of getting angry with my partner for not returning a heart for the ruff. Maybe there was no heart ruff available? Perhaps South saw another defensive possibility, like ruffing a club? That would mean declarer's shape was 6 – 1 – 2 – 4. True, partner could have helped me work this out by giving me a count signal in diamonds. But he had so many hearts he did not need...

I had only one good defensive option: cut the communication with the dummy, while I still had a trump left to prevent declarer from discarding a club loser on a heart honour. The return of a small diamond would have been the killing defence. I could win the ♦A on the next round to exit with a club: down one.

HELPLESS 1

Contrariness represents the intellectual instinct of self-preservation. Do what declarer does not want you to do.

After a 2♦ transfer, partner, sitting South, wanted to bid but was afraid.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass!
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

♠ 10 9 7 5
♥ 5 3
♦ A Q J
♣ Q 8 6 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 2
♥ K Q 8 7 4 2
♦ 7 3
♣ J 9 7 5

The opening lead was the ♠10 to South's queen and declarer's ace. A spade ruff is followed by a diamond to the king, partner following with the ♦10 to signal an odd number of cards in the suit. I cashed the queen of diamonds... and it was too late.

Here is the full hand:

	♠ 10 9 7 5										
	♥ 5 3										
	♦ A Q J										
	♣ Q 8 6 4										
♠ A J 4											
♥ A J 10 9											
♦ K 5 4											
♣ A 3 2											
	<table> <tr> <td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ 2									
		♥ K Q 8 7 4 2									
		♦ 7 3									
		♣ J 9 7 5									
		♠ K Q 8 6 3									
		♥ 6									
		♦ 10 9 8 6 2									
		♣ K 10									

Declarer intended to eliminate spades and diamonds and I should have prevented it. Contrariness is a virtue in defence – so long as it is declarer not partner whom, you are trying to thwart. I should have played a club immediately to unblock the suit. To beat the contract I needed to find my partner with the club ace doubleton or the K 10.

If I don't play a club declarer eliminates spades and diamonds while drawing trumps, then plays the ♣A and another club to endplay South.

HELPLESS 2

The calf will always be a child, always disappointed when the essence of the problem becomes clear...too late!

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

♠ 7 6 2
♥ A K 9 7 6
♦ K 2
♣ 10 8 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 8 3
♥ 4 2
♦ A Q J 7 4
♣ K 7 3

Lead ♥7. Declarer covered the ten with the queen winning the trick. A diamond finesse and spade finesse followed, and declarer claimed 11 tricks.

Here comes the board:

♠ 7 6 2
♥ A K 9 7 6
♦ K 2
♣ 10 8 4

♠ A K J
♥ Q J 5 3
♦ 8 6 5
♣ A 9 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 8 3
♥ 4 2
♦ A Q J 7 4
♣ K 7 3

♠ Q 9 5 4
♥ 10 8
♦ 10 9 3
♣ Q J 5 2

"Where is the problem," you may ask. I forgot to play the king of diamonds at the first diamond trick! If I play the king, West will have to guess the layout. If he believes my king is singleton, he will probably duck.

The card layout might be as follows:

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

With this layout, ducking the king is the only route to ten tricks. You can see that rising with the diamond king at the second trick would be disastrous if declarer held 10x in diamonds. However, holding 10x and with only one entry to the dummy, every declarer would surely lead the ten at trick two. Otherwise he might block the suit.

HELPLESS 3

Helplessness means being incapable of making a sensible analysis.

Declarer's camouflage presented the opponents with a problem on the following deal.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
4♥	pass	6♥	All Pass

	N W E S	♠ A Q 10 7
		♥ A Q 4 2
		♦ 8 3
		♣ A 8 5
♠ 9 8 3 2		
♥ 6		
♦ A 10 9 7 6 2		
♣ J 9		

The opening lead of the ♥7 was won with the ace followed by a diamond.

I ducked. After a moment of hesitation declarer played the king and returned a small diamond. On the second round of diamonds my partner followed with the queen. I knew that West had the jack and didn't see any reason to overtake partner's queen. After winning the trick, partner exited with a spade. Declarer discarded two clubs on the queen and ace of spades and claimed 12 tricks.

Here is the full board:

♠ -		♠ K J 6 5 4
♥ K J 10 9 8 5 3		♥ 7
♦ K J 4		♦ Q 5
♣ Q 4 2		♣ K 10 7 6 3
	N W E S	♠ A Q 10 7 ♥ A Q 4 2 ♦ 8 3 ♣ A 8 5
	♠ 9 8 3 2	
	♥ 6	
	♦ A 10 9 7 6 2	
	♣ J 9	

I did not count declarer's tricks: 7 hearts + 2 diamonds (with a ruff) + 2 aces = 11. To set the contract, declarer must have a spade void. Moreover, partner must hold the club king and ten. I should have overtaken the diamond queen with the ace to return a club. A club discard on the diamond jack is of no significance. Without a club return partner will soon be squeezed in spades and clubs.

HELPLESS 4

The bidding was too primitive. East should have made a transfer to clubs followed by a bid showing spade shortage.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1NT	pass	3NT	All Pass

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

Lead ♠K. Declarer follows with the nine, partner signalling an even number of cards. I continue with the queen of spades, which declarer wins and returns a spade. I happily cash my spade tricks...

Here is the full deal:

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

The club suit was blocked, but by playing on the spade suit I helped declarer unblock it. Perhaps to be safe I should exit with a club at trick four?

HELPLESS 5

Your hand moves faster than your brain.

Here I made a lead directing bid.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1♠	2♥	Dbl	3♣
3♠	Pass	3NT	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

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

Lead ♣9. Declarer covers with the king, I win with the ace... and soon after West claims 10 tricks. I played like a calf. A clever declarer persuaded me to win the trick with the ace. Ducking the club would have promoted my partner's ♠9.

Here is the deal:

	♠ A 9 6										
	♥ A Q J 9 4 3										
	♦ 6 5										
	♣ 9 2										
♠ K Q J 7 5 3 2		♠ 4									
♥ 6		♥ K 8 5									
♦ K 8 3		♦ A Q 7 4 2									
♣ Q 4		♣ K 7 6 3									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 8										
	♥ 10 7 2										
	♦ J 10 9										
	♣ A J 10 8 5										

"Badly played hand," I remarked. "Instead of being sly, it would have been better to make an accurate analysis. Declarer should have won with the queen and returned a club."

The defence would then have had a dilemma:

- If I play the ♣A, West will ruff with the jack (North cannot overruff since he needs to protect his trump tricks), enter dummy with a diamond, and discard a heart on the club king.
- If I play a small club, declarer will discard a heart.

Still, I should not drag West's name through the muck and mire. The defenders' hands might have been different:

	♠ A 9										
	♥ A Q J 9 4 3										
	♦ 9 6 5										
	♣ 9 2										
♠ K Q J 7 5 3 2		♠ 4									
♥ 6		♥ K 8 5									
♦ K 8 3		♦ A Q 7 4 2									
♣ Q 4		♣ K 7 6 3									
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 10 8 6										
	♥ 10 7 2										
	♦ J 10										
	♣ A J 10 8 5										

As the cards lie, the defence can prevail if declarer wins the queen and returns a club. On the third trick I will play the club ace; North will overruff with the ace and cash the heart ace. A trump trick is promoted, this time in the South hand. On this layout only declarer's shrewd line of play gave him a chance to succeed. Instead of criticizing I should control my own reflexes. Better to stay silent and be thought a fool than open one's mouth and remove all doubt

HELPLESS 6

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

♠ J 9 4
♥ A 10 7 5 3
♦ 10 9 7 5
♣ A

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 10 8
♥ 8 6 2
♦ Q 8 3 2
♣ 7 4 2

The opening lead of the ♥5 was covered with the jack by South and won with the queen. Declarer then played the queen of clubs, partner following with the three. I dutifully exited with a diamond...

♠ J 9 4
♥ A 10 7 5 3
♦ 10 9 7 5
♣ A

♠ A 7 6
♥ K Q
♦ A J
♣ K Q J 10 6 5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 10 8
♥ 8 6 2
♦ Q 8 3 2
♣ 7 4 2

♠ Q 5 3 2
♥ J 9 4
♦ K 6 4
♣ 9 8 3

West claimed 10 tricks.

I wonder: "Should I have played the ace of hearts instead of a diamond?"

I knew who had the king of hearts. (If instead declarer had won the first trick with the king, the location of the queen would not have been obvious.) Another argument for cashing the heart ace is that if declarer's hand had been:

♠ A J
♥ K Q 4
♦ K J
♣ K Q J 10 6 5

he might have ducked the jack of hearts.

The associated conclusion is quite amusing. If declarer has three hearts with the king and queen and decides to win the first trick, he should win it with the queen! That is a play only a real beginner or a real expert would find.

HELPLESS 7

Even champions sometimes play "automatically" and make the routine play, not the right one.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
4♠	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All Pass			

N	E
W	S

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

♠ 8 7
 ♥ Q J 7 4
 ♦ A Q 9 7
 ♣ A K 5

Lead ♣2 (4th best). I win with the king and exit passively with a spade.

Did I plan my discards? Unfortunately, no. Declarer drew five rounds of trumps.

Here comes the full hand:

N	E
W	S

♠ 9 6 5
 ♥ K 9
 ♦ 6 5 4 2
 ♣ J 4 3 2

♠ A K Q J 10 3 2
 ♥ 6 3
 ♦ K 8 3
 ♣ 8

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

♠ 8 7
 ♥ Q J 7 4
 ♦ A Q 9 7
 ♣ A K 5

This is the final position:

N	E
W	S

♠ -
 ♥ K 9
 ♦ 6 5 4 2
 ♣ J

♠ 3 2
 ♥ 6 3
 ♦ K 8 3
 ♣ -

♠ -
 ♥ A 10 8 5
 ♦ J 10
 ♣ Q

♠ -
 ♥ Q J 7
 ♦ A Q 9
 ♣ A

Dummy pitched a heart on yet another spade, squeezing me in three suits.

- If I discard the ace of clubs, the queen becomes a winner.
- If I discard a diamond, declarer will play a heart to the ace and a diamond to the king. The contract will depend on who has the eight of diamonds.
- If I discard a heart, West will concede a heart trick.

How should I defend?

At the second trick I should have returned a heart, which would have solved the problem. I could also have played the queen of diamonds, which would have been even better. Why the queen? In a similar ending as below:

	♠ -	
	♥ K 9	
	♦ 6 5 4	
	♣ J	
♠ 3 2		♠ -
♥ 6 3		♥ A 10 8 5
♦ 8 3		♦ J
♣ -		♣ Q
	N W E S	
	♠ -	
	♥ Q J 7	
	♦ A 9	
	♣ A	

I can get rid of a heart. The diamond queen would accomplish three goals: keep control, establish the diamond suit, and prevent declarer from ruffing a diamond in dummy as I have control of the diamonds and can play trumps at the critical moment.

HELPLESS 8

Routine may help but is often harmful. Why? Very often it is based on a superficial analysis, and prevents you from really thinking.

Aggressive bidding both by the pre-empter and his partner often prevents the pre-empted side from arriving at the best possible contract.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			3♣
Dbl	4♣	Dbl	Pass
4♣	All Pass		

	♠ J 9 8 6	
	♥ K Q 4	
	♦ 6 5 3	
	♣ 9 3 2	
	N W E S	
	♠ Q 3	
	♥ J 9 8 3	
	♦ K 10 4 2	
	♣ K 7 6	

Lead ♣3. Partner wins with the ♣10 and returns the ♥10. Declarer ducks, and I win the trick with the queen and play a club to force declarer.

Here comes the full deal:

	♠ J 9 8 6										
	♥ K Q 4										
	♦ 6 5 3										
	♣ 9 3 2										
♠ A K 10 7 5	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 6 5 2		♥ J 9 8 3									
♦ A Q J		♦ K 10 4 2									
♣ 4		♣ K 7 6									
	♠ 4 2										
	♥ 10 7										
	♦ 9 8 7										
	♣ A Q J 10 8 5										

I misdefended the hand, as you will soon see.

The play continues. West ruffs a club, enters the dummy with the trump queen and ruffs another club. Next follow the ace and king of spades and three rounds of diamonds. Declarer arrives at this end position with the lead in dummy:

	♠ J										
	♥ K 4										
	♦ —										
	♣ —										
♠ —	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 6 5		♥ J 9									
♦ —		♦ 10									
♣ —		♣ —									
	♠ —										
	♥ 7										
	♦ —										
	♣ Q 8										

Now comes the ♦10, which crowns the work.

I knew declarer's distribution at the second trick: 5 - 4 - 3 - 1. At the third trick I should have played a diamond (preferably the six). I would have the setting tricks in my own hand, regardless of partner's cards, because declarer's communications to eliminate the clubs would be cut. The only condition is for South not to rise with a diamond honour should he hold one!

If South has a hand like this:

♠ 4 2
♥ 10 7
♦ Q 8 7
♣ A Q J 10 8 5

If South plays the diamond queen on the first round declarer will gain an extra entry to the dummy, because he can overtake the jack of diamonds with the king. Sensible defence requires cooperation within the partnership. The concentration and dedication of one player will not help if the other plays by rote.

Lead ♥10. West wins with the jack, cashes the heart ace (partner following with the three, signalling club values), and plays the ♠8 ducked in the dummy. I win the trick and exit dutifully with a club.

I played like a silly calf. West discarded a club on the king of hearts and gave up a spade. Now I could only force declarer with clubs once. I should have foreseen this and, after winning the first spade trick, returned the king of clubs instead of a small one.

This would have been the final position:

♠ 10 9 3		♠ —
♥ —		♥ Q 9
♦ A 6 5 3		♦ 4 2
♣ —		♣ Q 4 3
	N W E S	
		♠ Q 7
		♥ —
		♦ 9 7
		♣ 8 7 5

After winning the spade ace I can exit with a club and West will be helpless.

HELPLESS 10

The bidding proceeds in jumps here. Did West fall or was he pushed?

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
		1♠	4♥
6♣	All Pass		

♠ A 10 8 6 3
♥ 4
♦ Q 5 4 2
♣ 9 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 7 5 2
♥ A 7 3 2
♦ K 9 7 6
♣ —

Lead ♥4. Dummy is encouragingly weak. West wins with the ace and ruffs a heart with the club ace. South follows with the king and queen of hearts, indicating spade values. Declarer draws trumps in three rounds, partner following with a heart on the third round, and plays a spade. I duck and after winning the trick with the king of spades South exits with the jack of diamonds. It does not help much. Declarer wins with the ace in his hand and...

Here's the full hand:

	♠ A 10 8 6 3	
	♥ 4	
	♦ Q 5 4 2	
	♣ 9 4 3	
♠ 4		♠ Q J 7 5 2
♥ 6		♥ A 7 3 2
♦ A 8 3		♦ K 9 7 6
♣ A K Q J 10 8 6 2	N W E S	♣ —
	♠ K 9	
	♥ K Q J 10 9 8 5	
	♦ J 10	
	♣ 7 5	

West will arrive at this end position:

	♠ A	
	♥ —	
	♦ Q 5	
	♣ —	
♠ —		♠ Q
♥ —		♥ —
♦ 8 3		♦ K 9
♣ 2	N W E S	♣ —
	♠ 9	
	♥ 9	
	♦ 10	
	♣ —	

North will be squeezed in spades and diamonds.

Could I have avoided this? I was afraid that rising with the ace of spades would drop partner's singleton king. West's hand could have been:

♠ 9 4
♥ 6
♦ A 8
♣ A K Q J 10 8 6

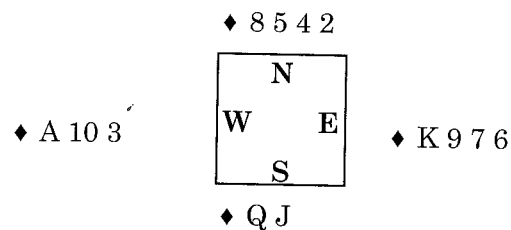
With the hand like this one, West might also have taken a chance at slam. Note, please, that he could not have bid 4NT as Blackwood: in this situation 4NT would show either a two-suited hand with both minors, or a slam invitation with a spade fit.

However, I had overlooked one thing: namely, my partner's bidding. If partner held the following cards:

♠ K
♥ K Q J 10 9 8 5
♦ J 10 3
♣ 7 5

would he have jumped to 4♥? Definitely not.

I was also discouraged from rising with the ace of spades because I was afraid of leading from my diamond holding, which might have solved declarer's problems in this suit. Even so, I should have played for my only chance, which was to find my partner with the diamond jack-ten. I could even slightly increase my chances if declarer held the ♦10. After rising with the ace of spades I should have played the ♦5, insinuating a somewhat different card layout.



The combination of the ♦5 together with my partner's optimistic bidding might have encouraged West to play diamonds from the top, which would work well if South held the following:

♠ K 9
 ♥ K Q J 10 9 8 5
 ♦ Q J
 ♣ 7 5

BORED 1

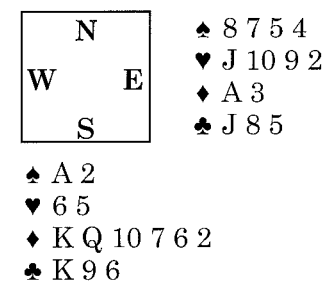
After a moment of analysis, a seemingly obvious line of play proves nonsensical.

Partner has decided to interfere in the bidding with a weak call.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣*	1♠	Dbl	2♦
4♥	All Pass		

* – Precision, 16+



Lead ♦9. Declarer ducks and I win with the queen and play the ace of spades and a spade. Why? Nobody knows. True, such a return is natural, "obvious", but there is no rush. If the spade tricks are there, they won't go away.

Here is the full deal:

	♠ K Q 9 6 3										
	♥ 7 4										
	♦ 9 5										
	♣ 10 7 4 3										
♠ J 10	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 8 7 5 4
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K Q 8 3		♥ J 10 9 2									
♦ J 8 4		♦ A 3									
♣ A Q 2		♣ J 8 5									
	♠ A 2										
	♥ 6 5										
	♦ K Q 10 7 6 2										
	♣ K 9 6										

I have given the contract away. How?

Declarer will ruff two spades in his hand to produce the following ending:

	♠ K										
	♥ —										
	♦ —										
	♣ 10 7 4 3										
♠ —	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 3		♥ J 10									
♦ J		♦ —									
♣ A Q 2		♣ J 8 5									
	♠ —										
	♥ —										
	♦ K 10										
	♣ K 9 6										

Playing out the last two trumps will squeeze me in diamonds and clubs. Was there anything I could do? At the second trick I could continue with diamonds. Then after winning a trick with the spade ace I could play the remaining diamond honour to eliminate the menace.

BORED 2

Boredom (and self-pity) when looking only at weak hands often prevents proper concentration and focus.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♣	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

♠ J 10 9 3
♥ J 10 9 2
♦ K 9 2
♣ K 10

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 7 5
♥ A Q 8 7 5 4
♦ J 7 4
♣ 5

Lead ♠J. Declarer ducks the first spade, wins the spade continuation with the king in hand, cashes the king of hearts...

Here comes the full deal:

♠ J 10 9 3		♠ A 7 5									
♥ J 10 9 2		♥ A Q 8 7 5 4									
♦ K 9 2		♦ J 7 4									
♣ K 10		♣ 5									
♠ K 6 4											
♥ K											
♦ A 8 5 3											
♣ A J 7 6 4											
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 8 2										
	♥ 6 3										
	♦ Q 10 6										
	♣ Q 9 8 3 2										

Is there any clever defence the calf can produce?

He should follow with the nine on the heart king (the jack or ten will do) to persuade the declarer to overtake the king with the ace and immediately continue hearts, a play which will lead to a three trick defeat. Declarer will have a different heart layout in his mind.

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

In this variant, overtaking the king of hearts with the ace, cashing the queen and giving up a trick to the jack of hearts is the winning line. After all, anyone can make nine tricks with hearts 3-3. You can easily collect nine tricks this way: 5 hearts, 2 spades, 1 diamond and 1 club.

However, when declarer cashes the king of hearts the calf automatically follows with the two. Does this make a difference? Declarer will not overtake the king of hearts, and will instead give up a diamond trick. After a spade return he will check the heart position and establish a diamond. Eventually he will finish up down one. In a team match going three down vulnerable as opposed to one makes a difference of 5 IMPs; if non-vulnerable, 3 IMPs. At pairs a three trick set will produce a top for the defenders while one down will yield an above average score for declarer.

BORED 3

If the calf knew that he was a calf, he would automatically stop being a calf, which implies that players that are calves are not aware of the fact.

EW Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1♦	Pass	1NT	Pass
2♥*	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♥	All Pass

* - 5+ diamonds + 4 hearts; game forcing.

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

Lead ♣2. West won with the king as South follows low, played a heart to the dummy and ruffed a club. Next came the king of hearts and a heart to the ace, partner following in trumps three times. A diamond ducked in hand and... declarer took 13 tricks.

Here comes the full layout:

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

Now I know, though too late, that I should have covered the diamond ten with the jack. Declarer would probably duck the jack to secure the contract. Covering the jack with the ace could lead to losing the slam if diamonds are 4-2, which would produce a bottom score. 6♥+1 (1460) is worth 66% for EW (most pairs duplicated this result). A result of 6♥= (1430) would yield only 17% for EW (some pairs stopped in a game).

BORED 4

Looking at a problem with a bird's eye view is an attempt to grasp the problem as a whole.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
	3♣	Pass	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

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

Lead ♣A, ♣K, ♣Q. I discard a spade...

W	N	E	S
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
3♣	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣	Pass	6♠	All Pass

♠ J 6
♥ K J 4
♦ J 7 6
♣ Q J 9 8 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠	Q 8 3 2
♥	3 2
♦	A K 9 4 2
♣	A 10

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♠ J 6
♥ K J 4
♦ J 7 6
♣ Q J 9 8 2

♠ A K 10 9 7
♥ A 9 7 5
♦ 5
♣ 6 5 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 8 3 2
♥ 3 2
♦ A K 9 4 2
♣ A 10

♠ 5 4
♥ Q 10 8 6
♦ Q 10 8 3
♣ K 7 4

I could have played the jack on the seven of spades and cut the communication with the dummy.

BORED 6

The calf does not have the doubts or dilemmas that are typical for people who are aware of their surroundings. He does not ask himself: "Was there anything else I could do?"

The bidding has revealed a lot here.

Both Vulnerable Teams

W	N	E	S
1♦	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4♥*	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♣**	Pass	6♦	All Pass

* – cue bid

** - 3 keycards out of 5

Diagram of a square table with North (N) at the top, South (S) at the bottom, West (W) on the left, and East (E) on the right. To the right of the table is a list of cards for each player:

- North: ♠ A 8, ♥ K 10 7 2, ♦ J 10 4, ♣ K Q J 2
- South: ♠ K 10 4, ♥ A Q 9 3, ♦ 9 5, ♣ 9 7 5 3
- East: (No cards listed)
- West: (No cards listed)

Lead ♥4. The heart cue bid indicated a shortage, so partner led the fourth best, suggesting he had the jack. It was an excellent lead: I played the ♥9, winning the trick, and exited with the ♦5. West drew trumps in two rounds, North following suit, and a club to the dummy was followed by a heart ruff.

Here comes the deal.

♠ J 9 7 6 2
♥ J 6 5 4
♦ 6 3
♣ 8 4

♠ Q 5 3
♥ 8
♦ A K Q 8 7 2
♣ A 10 6

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 10 4
♥ A Q 9 3
♦ 9 5
♣ 9 7 5 3

♠ A 8
♥ K 10 7 2
♦ J 10 4
♣ K Q J 2

In no time, declarer arrives at this end position and plays the $\clubsuit K$.

♠ J 9
♥ J 6
♦ —
♣ —

♠ Q 5 3
♥ —
♦ 7
♣ —

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A
♥ K 10
♦ —
♣ K

♠ K 10
♥ A Q
♦ —
♣ —

I am caught in a criss-cross squeeze. What did the calf have to do with that?

On the second round of hearts I should have played the queen. Below is the possible layout you are trying to simulate:

♠ K x x x
♥ A Q 9
♦ x x
♣ x x x x

Declarer would have faced a choice of lines. Instead of playing for the criss-cross squeeze he could have played for the ace of hearts to fall. Then he would only have needed to ruff hearts twice to establish the heart king. I should have concealed my smallest heart, which was lower than the opening lead, to camouflage the layout. From the point of view of declarer, North could have led the ♥4 from either of the following two holdings:

♥ J 6 5 4 or ♥ J 6 5 4 3

BORED 7

It is not enough to follow suit. One has to select the right card.

I made a preemptive opening bid of 2♥ but the opponents still reached a slam.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			2♥
2♠	Pass	3♥	Dbl
Rdbl*	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	6♠	All Pass

* – ace of hearts

N	♠ A K 10 3
W	♥ Q 6
E	♦ A K 8
S	♣ A 10 3 2
♠ 6	
♥ K J 10 5 4 2	
♦ Q 6 2	
♣ Q 8 7	

Lead ♥8. Declarer played small from the dummy and won my ten of hearts with the ace. He drew trumps in three rounds, partner following suit, and cashed the ace and king of diamonds. On the ace of diamonds, partner played the jack. Declarer finessed against my queen of clubs and claimed 12 tricks.

Here comes the full hand:

	♠ 9 8 7										
	♥ 9 8 3										
	♦ J 10 9 7										
	♣ 9 6 5										
♠ Q J 5 4 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 10 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 7		♥ Q 6									
♦ 5 4 3		♦ A K 8									
♣ K J 4		♣ A 10 3 2									
	♠ 6										
	♥ K J 10 5 4 2										
	♦ Q 6 2										
	♣ Q 8 7										

I should have played the queen on the king of diamonds without a second thought. Why?

To present a false image of my hand. Declarer will finesse the jack of clubs and draw all of the trumps to arrive at this end position:

♠ —		♠ —									
♥ —		♥ Q									
♦ 10 9		♦ —									
♣ 9 6		♣ A 10 3									
	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♠ —		♠ —									
♥ 7		♥ K									
♦ 5		♦ ?									
♣ K 4		♣ Q 8 ?									

If my distribution is 1 - 6 - 2 - 4 (in which case I was forced to play my ♦Q on the second round), he should play the king of clubs and throw me in with the heart king.

There are many possible variations on this hand. Let's imagine the following distribution:

	♠ 9 8 7										
	♥ 9 8 3										
	♦ Q J 10 9 7										
	♣ 6 5										
♠ Q J 5 4 2	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A K 10 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 7		♥ Q 6									
♦ 5 4 3		♦ A K 8									
♣ K J 4		♣ A 10 3 2									
	♠ 6										
	♥ K J 10 5 4 2										
	♦ 6 2										
	♣ Q 9 8 7										

This time I cannot give declarer a false impression of my hand, but my partner should do the job. He should follow with the jack of diamonds to simulate a holding of J1097. This would suggest that the queen of diamonds is with South in a 1 - 6 - 3 - 3 pattern.

BORED 8

I get poor cards too often and feel sorry for myself, watching the bidding without paying any attention.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♣	Dbl	1♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3NT	All Pass

N	♠ Q 8 3
W	♥ Q 10 5
E	♦ Q J 9 8 2
S	♣ 8 6

♠ 9 7 6 4
♥ 8 4
♦ 10 3
♣ J 10 9 4 3

Partner leads the ♥6. West wins with the king in hand and plays the king of diamonds. North wins the ace, cashes the heart ace and exits with a small heart. Declarer started with the king third of hearts. Now West reels off the diamond suit. On the third heart and three diamonds I discarded three spades and a club, the obvious discards in my opinion.

The full hand:

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

N	♠ 9 7 6 4
W	♥ 8 4
E	♦ 10 3
S	♣ J 10 9 4 3

Here is the final position:

♠ A	♠ K 10	♠ Q 8 3
♥ —	♥ J 9	♥ —
♦ —	♦ —	♦ —
♣ A Q 7 5	♣ ?	♣ 8 6

N	♠ 9
W	♥ —
E	♦ —
S	♣ ? 10 9 4

It was clear to declarer that North's hand was 4 – 5 – 3 – 1. Only a four card spade suit hand would explain his double with 12 – 15 points and five cards in hearts. But where is the king of clubs?

Discarding down to four clubs and one spade as South guarantees the success of the contract. Why?

West plays two black aces and, if the king does not fall, exits with a small club. I will have to give him a trick with the queen of clubs. I should have kept three clubs and two spades, which would have forced declarer to make a guess about the king of clubs.

	♠ K 10	
	♥ J 9	
	♦ —	
	♣ ?	
♠ A		♠ Q 8 3
♥ —		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ A Q 7 5	N W E S	♣ 8 6
	♠ 9 7	
	♥ —	
	♦ —	
	♣ ? 10 9	

Getting rid of two clubs and keeping two spades is a very difficult play. Why?

1. It requires a very precise analysis. Holding so few high cards discourages many players from thinking.
2. A pairs tournament makes us more careful about potentially giving tricks away:

	♠ K 10	
	♥ J 9	
	♦ —	
	♣ Q	
♠ A		♠ Q 8 3
♥ —		♥ —
♦ —		♦ —
♣ A K 7 5	N W E S	♣ 8 6
	♠ 9 7	
	♥ —	
	♦ —	
	♣ J 10 9	

In this slightly different position, if South lets go of a club unnecessarily West will easily collect 10 tricks after conceding a club.

3. A clever manoeuvre by declarer should be anticipated... but that is easier said than done.

GREEDY 1

Greed is typical of the calf.

Everybody took part in the bidding here.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			2♥*
3♦	3♠	4♣	4♠
Pass	Pass	4NT**	Pass
5♦	All Pass		

* - weak two

** - choose between clubs and diamonds.

♠ K Q 8 6 5 2
♥ 2
♦ 7 6 3 2
♣ K 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 10
♥ 10 5 4
♦ A 10
♣ A Q 10 9 7 5

I decided to lead a heart. Declarer took partner's jack with the ace and finessed clubs by leading to the queen, cashed the club ace (on which he followed suit), then led another club and ruffed partner's jack with the ♦4. I overruffed with the ♦6 and played the king of spades.

The full hand:

♠ A 3		♠ K Q 8 6 5 2									
♥ A 9 7		♥ 2									
♦ K Q J 9 8 4		♦ 7 6 3 2									
♣ 4 3		♣ K 2									
	<table> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 ♥ 10 5 4 ♦ A 10 ♣ A Q 10 9 7 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
		♠ 9 7 4									
		♥ K Q J 8 6 3									
		♦ 5									
		♣ J 8 6									

I should have been alerted to the danger by the fact that a competent declarer who held all the top trumps had ruffed with his smallest one. When I overruffed and played the king of spades, I let the contract through. Declarer crossed to the dummy with the ten of diamonds and discarded a spade on the established club. I ruffed again but this was the end of the defensive winners. I exchanged two hearts and a spade for two trump tricks. If I refrain from overruffing, there is nothing declarer can do.

GREEDY 2

It happens all too often that I take declarer's honour with my ace without making a full analysis of the position. Before winning a trick we should first consider ducking.

Partner pre-empted in first position, but as usual the opponents ended up declaring the hand.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
4♥	5♦	5♥	3♦
Pass	Dbl	All Pass	Pass

♠ A J 4 2
♥ —
♦ 9 7 6
♣ A Q 10 9 6 4

N	♠ 9 8 6 5 3
W	♥ 10 9 7
E	♦ 3
S	♣ K J 8 7

Lead ♦7. Partner won with the ace and played the ♠10. I won the queen with the ace and...I played too fast. Why?

I now had to guess what declarer's hand was.

♠ K Q
♥ A K Q J 8 4 2
♦ K 8
♣ 2

If this is the layout it is better to cash the club ace. Why?

Because if not declarer will have enough communications to establish the fifth spade.

♠ K Q 7
♥ A K Q J 8 4 2
♦ K 8
♣ —

If this is the layout I have to return a spade (or diamond). Trying to cash the ace of clubs will give the contract away.

The full hand:

♠ A J 4 2
♥ —
♦ 9 7 6
♣ A Q 10 9 6 4

♠ K Q
♥ A K Q J 8 4 3 2
♦ K 8
♣ 2

N	♠ 9 8 6 5 3
W	♥ 10 9 7
E	♦ 3
S	♣ K J 8 7

♠ 10 7
♥ 6 5
♦ A Q J 10 5 4 2
♣ 5 3

Ducking the queen of spades would have been sufficient to keep control in either variation.

GREEDY 3

Natural bidding is always attractive to me. Contracts played in a 4-3 trump fit are not very popular among bridge players, who prefer to be in 3NT instead. Contracts with a 4-3 trump fit frequently require careful and well designed declarer play to succeed, but also accurate defence to defeat.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♠	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 6 5
♥ Q J 4
♦ A K J 10 2
♣ 6

♠ Q 9 8 7 3
♥ 9 5
♦ Q 7 5 3
♣ A 9

Lead ♠J. Declarer took the ace of spades and advanced the jack of diamonds! This was a highly surprising move by declarer. After winning the trick with the diamond queen I played the ace of clubs and a small club. West ruffed in dummy and cashed two hearts, crossed to his hand with the ♦9, and pulled the remaining trumps with the ace and king of hearts, discarding two spades from dummy.

Result: 11 tricks.

Here is the full board:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

A spade return would have reduced the number of declarer's tricks to ten.

And ducking the jack of diamonds? That would have complicated the play tremendously for declarer. He would have no good option and end up short one trick. Why?

- Attempting to ruff out the spades would not help since North can over-ruff.
- Drawing trumps and giving up a diamond will give the defenders three club tricks.
- Exiting with a club immediately leads nowhere. South will rise with the ace and return a heart.

GREEDY 4

When the auction takes off, it often forces us to guess whether we should sacrifice or let the opponents play their slam, as we do not know whether the contract can be made.

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
2♣*	3♣	Dbl	5♣
5♣	6♣	6♣	All Pass

* – game forcing

	N		♠ Q 4 2
W		E	♥ K 10 9 8 4 2
			♦ Q 4 3
	S		♣ 5
			♠ 7 6 5
			♥ 6
			♦ K 10 2
			♣ K J 9 7 3 2

Lead ♣A. West ruffs with the spade jack and cashes the ace of spades (North discarding a club) and plays the heart ace and the jack, ducking in dummy after some academic reflection. You ruff and return... what?

The full hand:

	♠ –										
	♥ Q 7 5 3										
	♦ J 9 8										
	♣ A Q 10 8 6 4										
♠ A K J 10 9 8 3											
♥ A J											
♦ A 7 6 5											
♣ –											
	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ Q 4 2 ♥ K 10 9 8 4 2 ♦ Q 4 3 ♣ 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ 7 6 5										
	♥ 6										
	♦ K 10 2										
	♣ K J 9 7 3 2										

It does not matter what you do – the board is over.

As you can see, ruffing the heart gave the contract away (the four of spades now provides an extra entry to the dummy). Refusing to be greedy would have beaten the slam.

GREEDY 5

Sometimes it is difficult to refuse a trick.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♠	2♠*	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

* – 5 hearts + 5 of a minor

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 5 4 2
♥ 9 8 4
♦ J 10 4
♣ A K J 5

♠ K 10 9 8
♥ 10 6
♦ 7 6 5 3 2
♣ Q 2

Lead ♥A, ♥K and a heart. The calf ruffs greedily and... declarer claims the contract sooner or later. Why?

The full hand:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 10 9 8
♥ 10 6
♦ 7 6 5 3 2
♣ Q 2

Declarer will finesse spades twice, having just enough entries to the dummy, and can claim ten tricks. On the third round of hearts South should discard a club, cutting declarer's communications with the dummy and preventing him from finessing the spades twice. Declarer will be one entry short to the dummy and the defence will collect two spade tricks, setting the game.

Note that declarer could have thwarted this defence by unblocking the queen and jack of hearts at the first two tricks, establishing the nine as an entry.

This unblocking can be done only if you make great effort in analysis, anticipating:

- The 4-0 trump break;
- The fall of the ♥10. Using standard count signals, the ♥10 will appear at the first trick;
- The excellent defence detailed above.

Here is the final position we have reached:

	♠ —	
	♥ 10	
	♦ K 6	
	♣ Q 10 7	
♠ Q 5		♠ 10
♥ J 3		♥ A
♦ 7		♦ A 10 9 8
♣ 9		♣ —
	N W E S	
	♠ 9 8	
	♥ —	
	♦ J 4	
	♣ K J	

As North, I have just ruffed the jack of spades and now there is nothing I can do.

- If I play a heart, West will ruff a diamond and cross to the dummy with the spade ten.
- If I play a diamond, declarer will ruff a diamond and reach the dummy with the heart ace.
- If I play a club, declarer will ruff with the heart ace and establish the diamond suit. He will draw the remaining trumps and has spade communications to the dummy.

It would have been enough to refuse to ruff the second round of spades, discarding another club instead of being greedy. Then I could ruff the spade continuation and exit with a heart.

You may say that I demand too much from the calf. True enough: I demand from the bridge player that he try to be like a chess player and anticipate a few moves in advance. In this case, one should think before ruffing and not after.

GREEDY 7

Sometimes one has to refuse to win a trick for a long time.

Everybody joined in here:

Both Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1♥	Pass	2♥	Dbl
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
3♥	All Pass		

♠ A 6 2
♥ A 6 3 2
♦ 10 6
♣ 10 8 6 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J 9 5
♥ K 10 4
♦ K J 8 5
♣ 9 7 5

Lead ♦10. Partner follows with the ♦2 (suggesting an even number of cards or encouragement). Declarer wins with the queen, then plays a heart to the queen and a heart to the king. I duck twice. On the second round of hearts South discards the ♠4. Now declarer plays a spade to the king. I win and...

The full hand:

	♠ A 6 2										
	♥ A 6 3 2										
	♦ 10 6										
	♣ 10 8 6 2										
♠ K Q 3	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 9 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ Q J 9 7 5		♥ K 10 4									
♦ Q 9 4		♦ K J 8 5									
♣ A 3		♣ 9 7 5									
	♠ 10 8 7 4										
	♥ 8										
	♦ A 7 3 2										
	♣ K Q J 4										

I would arrange to ruff a diamond but declarer could reach the table with the jack of spades and discard his club on the last diamond. I defended badly. My partner's spade discard placed the king and queen of spades with declarer.

I should have ducked four times on this deal: twice in hearts and twice in spades. I would have set a record. Imagine an article titled:

Defenders Holding Three Aces Ducked First Five Tricks

That was the way to beat this modest 3♥ contract.

THOUGHTLESS 1

After his partner's 1♥ opening East had a difficult hand to bid. He decided to hide his spade suit and instead showed an invitational hand with clubs.

EW Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
1♥	Pass	3♣*	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

* – invitational with 6 clubs

♠ Q 8 6														
♥ 8 7 2														
♦ K Q J 9 6														
♣ Q 3														
<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		<table><tr><td>♠ 9 4 3 2</td></tr><tr><td>♥ 5 4</td></tr><tr><td>♦ A</td></tr><tr><td>♣ A J 10 9 8 2</td></tr></table>	♠ 9 4 3 2	♥ 5 4	♦ A	♣ A J 10 9 8 2
	N													
W		E												
	S													
♠ 9 4 3 2														
♥ 5 4														
♦ A														
♣ A J 10 9 8 2														

On my lead of the ♦K, partner signalled to show an odd number of cards. Declarer reached his hand with the heart ace and played a club to the dummy. I played the queen accurately...

Here is the full hand:

	♠ Q 8 6										
	♥ 8 7 2										
	♦ K Q J 9 6										
	♣ Q 3										
♠ A K	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 9 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A K J 6 3		♥ 5 4									
♦ 10 8 7 5		♦ A									
♣ 7 6		♣ A J 10 9 8 2									
	♠ J 10 7 5										
	♥ Q 10 9										
	♦ 4 3 2										
	♣ K 5 4										

Declarer had intended to finesse in clubs, hoping for 4 – 4 diamond break or a favourable location of the nine of diamonds. Rising with the queen destroyed that plan.

Declarer ducked. I played a diamond honour and exited with my second club. West had second thoughts and decided to win with the ace and play for a successful heart finesse and a 3-3 heart break. This way declarer came to nine tricks.

Executing a technically correct manoeuvre but ignoring the context is a silly thing to do. In almost every similar situation rising with the queen would be the correct defence and failure to do so would be an error. In this case, however, we are certain to beat the contract if partner wins the trick. On the other hand, our three small hearts indicate that declarer may have five easy tricks in that suit. To realise the importance of the context, imagine that the queen of hearts is with North:

♠ Q 8 6
♥ Q 7 2
♦ K Q J 9 6
♣ Q 3

In this situation rising with the queen of clubs is automatic. Declarer will not make the contract by playing on hearts. Let us consider a different layout:

♠ 8 6
♥ Q 7 2
♦ K Q J 9 6
♣ K Q 3

Following with a small card on the first club trick is usually technically correct. However, in this example, such defence will automatically give the contract away. Declarer will switch to hearts and collect 9 tricks – 2 spades, 4 hearts, a diamond and 2 clubs. A sensible defence is to rise with the queen of clubs and, after winning the trick, play a diamond honour hoping that partner will unblock the ten if he holds it. That will give the defence five tricks and beat the contract. If declarer has the ten of diamonds, playing a club will force him to make a decision: should he finesse in clubs or play for his chance in hearts?

THOUGHTLESS 2

Taking the line of least resistance.

NS Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♣*	Pass	2♥	Pass
3♦	Pass	3♥	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

* – 4th Suit Forcing

	N		♠ A 9 4 3
W		E	♥ K J 10
			♦ K 5 4 3
	S		♣ J 8
			♠ K J 7
			♥ A 5 2
			♦ 10 9 6
			♣ K 10 5 4

Lead ♣2 (4th best). I cover the eight with the ten and...

Here comes the board:

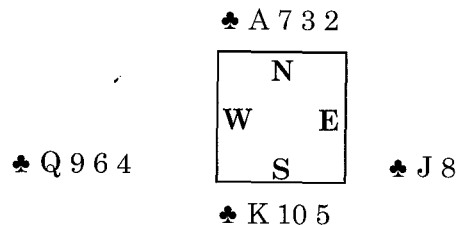
		♠ 8 6 5 2
		♥ 8 7 4
		♦ 8 7
		♣ A 9 3 2
♠ Q 10		♠ A 9 4 3
♥ Q 9 6 3		♥ K J 10
♦ A Q J 2		♦ K 5 4 3
♣ Q 7 6		♣ J 8
	N W E S	
		♠ K J 7
		♥ A 5 2
		♦ 10 9 6
		♣ K 10 5 4

After giving up a heart trick, declarer brought the contract home.

I played too fast and did not think enough. It should have been obvious to me that partner was underleading the ace. Why?

Declarer did not rise with the jack. If he had held ace-third of clubs, even with the nine, playing the jack from the dummy would have been automatic. We cannot count on any other honours in partner's hand if we count all the points and declarer's tricks: 4 diamonds, 3 hearts, a spade and a club. The defenders' tricks: 3 clubs and a heart.

It is obvious then that playing the ten of clubs leads nowhere. I should have forced partner to return a spade by winning the trick with the king of clubs and playing back the ten. Playing the club suit this way does not make much sense and will alert partner that he needs to shift.



If this were the situation playing the ten at trick one would have been much better. North's seven is enough to get three tricks for the defence in the suit. Winning with the club king is a sort of Lavinthal signal. Partner will, we hope, work out to take his ace and dutifully return a spade. Now declarer will be helpless:

1. If he rises with the spade he will concede two spades, two clubs and a heart.
2. If he ducks, we will continue clubs. This way we will always get three clubs, a spade and a heart to beat the contract.

THOUGHTLESS 3

The safe return is not always a good choice.

Our active role in the bidding did not discourage our opponents from bidding game.

EW Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
1♥	2♣	2♥	3♣
4♥	All Pass		

♠ 9 6 5
♥ A Q
♦ J 6 2
♣ K Q 10 5 3



Declarer won the ♣K opening lead with the ace, partner signalling an even number of clubs. Declarer played a heart and I won with the queen, cashed the heart ace (partner discarding the ♦9, showing an odd number of cards in the suit), and safely returned a club, thinking: "let declarer do his own work."

Here is the full deal:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 8	
♥ 4	
♦ K 9 7 5 3	
♣ J 9 8 2	

Working out my intentions, declarer crossed to the dummy, ruffed the last club and played three rounds of spades, throwing my partner in. The passive strategy of the calf was punished. I should have shifted to a spade after winning the heart ace and prevented the club elimination.

THOUGHTLESS 4

Declarer's strange manoeuvres should have alerted me to the problem here.

NS Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
	1♥	Dbl	4♥
4♠	All Pass		

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 9 8 4	
♥ 8	
♦ A Q 7 4	
♣ A K 7 6	

♠ 3	
♥ A 10 7 6 3	
♦ 9 3 2	
♣ 8 5 3 2	

Lead ♣J. Declarer wins with the ace and plays the diamond king, a diamond to the queen, and discards a heart on the diamond ace. Now the last diamond is played from the dummy. I carefully give a count signal in hearts and... I played like a calf again. Why? West discards his second heart and communication between the defenders has vanished.

Here is the full deal:

♠ A K 6
 ♥ Q J 9 4 2
 ♦ J 10 6 5
 ♣ J

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q J 7 5 2
 ♥ K 5
 ♦ K 8
 ♣ Q 10 9 4

♠ 10 9 8 4
 ♥ 8
 ♦ A Q 7 4
 ♣ A K 7 6

♠ 3
 ♥ A 10 7 6 3
 ♦ 9 3 2
 ♣ 8 5 3 2

I should have ruffed with the ♠3 and prevented declarer from making this manoeuvre.

THOUGHTLESS 5

The calf's play reminds me of someone banging his head against a brick wall. It vividly demonstrates the hardness of the wall.

None Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All Pass		

♠ J 8
♥ K Q 8 7 5
♦ Q 6
♣ Q 7 5 3

N	♠ 4 3 2
W E	♥ J 4 2
S	♦ 9 7 4 2
	♣ A K 6

I led the ♥K and a second heart. Declarer ruffed, played a club to the dummy (partner signalling even number of clubs), and a spade from the dummy to the queen. “I follow with the jack!” declared one of the students loudly. “You are a calf and not a Fox,” I replied. “You cannot be so prodigal with your honours, regardless of the context.”

Here comes the deal:

	♠ J 8										
	♥ K Q 8 7 5										
	♦ Q 6										
	♣ Q 7 5 3										
♠ A Q 10 9 7 6	<table border="1"><tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr><tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr></table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 4 3 2
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 3		♥ J 4 2									
♦ A K J 8		♦ 9 7 4 2									
♣ 8 4		♣ A K 6									
	♠ K 5										
	♥ A 10 9 6										
	♦ 10 5 3										
	♣ J 10 9 2										

After North followed with the jack of spades declarer crossed to the dummy with his last club and played a spade. Now he was forced to play diamonds from the top. The resulting 480 was well below average for N/S. Of course if North had had a *small* doubleton diamond the defence would have worked perfectly.

THOUGHTLESS 6

Evil may not rest, but, alas, good falls asleep far too often.

Low-level contracts present many subtle opportunities for the defence.

NS Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
1NT	All Pass		

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

Lead ♥5. Declarer won the jack with the queen and played a spade to the ten and a spade to the king. I carefully played spades from the bottom, signalling club values. West finessed the diamond queen and continued the suit to establish a third diamond trick.

Result: 10 tricks and 79% for EW.

Was there anything I could do? Not much in the bidding. Any intervention would most likely have been doubled.

The full hand:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

	♠ 9 7 6	
	♥ J 7 6	
	♦ J 10 4	
	♣ K J 9 6	

On the second spade trick I should have contributed the nine. It would probably have encouraged West to run the ♠J next, creating communication problems which would have prevented him from establishing the extra diamond trick. Maybe declarer should finesse in diamonds before playing the third spade?

THOUGHTLESS 7

Nobody knows what mischief the calf can perpetrate.

None Vulnerable
Teams

W	N	E	S
2♣*	Pass	2♦**	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

* – game forcing

** – maximum of 1 control (A=2, K=1)

♠ K Q 6 3
♥ 9 6
♦ 6 5 3
♣ Q 10 7 4

	N	
W		E
	S	

	♠ J 8 7	
	♥ 8 4 2	
	♦ 10 9 8 7	
	♣ 9 8 2	

Lead ♥9. Declarer drew trumps in three rounds and played the ace of spades and a spade. I rose with the queen and shifted to a club... too late!

The full hand:

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

Declarer claimed ten tricks. What did I do wrong?

I should have ducked the spade. Declarer's decision to play on spades strongly suggests that declarer holds four cards in the suit. We have to look at the best way to develop a trick in spades. An experienced declarer will play the eight from dummy on the second round which partner will win with the nine. Why?

♠ H 9 6 3

♠ A 10 4 2

♠ J 8 7

W N E S

♠ H 5

With this distribution playing the eight on the second round of spades is the only winning option. Ducking with the king and queen does not happen very frequently and the original layout is the only one where it is right for declarer to play the jack as opposed to the nine.

THOUGHTLESS 8

The quickness of the hand deceives the brain.

The bidding was somewhat unusual.

EW Vulnerable Teams

W	N	E	S
			3♣
Dbl	Pass	4♠	Pass
6♥	All Pass		

♠ Q J 9 6 5 3
♥ 9 7
♦ K J 6 4
♣ 9

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K 10 7 4
♥ 6 2
♦ 10 8 2
♣ J 4 3

I dutifully led the ♣9. Declarer won with the ace, drew two rounds of trumps (partner following with a club on the second heart trick), and played the queen of diamonds. My hand was faster than my head. I won with the king and...

Here comes the full deal:

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

	N		♠ A K 10 7 4
W		E	♥ 6 2
	S		♦ 10 8 2
			♣ J 4 3

♠ 8 2
♥ 5
♦ 9 7 3
♣ K Q 10 8 7 5 2

I should have counted to twelve a bit earlier: eight hearts, two spades and two minor suit aces. What could be the reason for such a strange play? It is obvious – declarer has a void in spades.

After winning the king of diamonds I was endplayed – allowing declarer to guess diamonds when I returned the suit. It would have been enough to duck the diamond queen. Declarer would have finished up one trick short.

THOUGHTLESS 9

“Misleading calf” – the title sounds a bit unusual.

NS Vulnerable
Pairs

W	N	E	S
	1♠	Dbl	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

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

	N		♠ 9 8
W		E	♥ 10 9 4 2
	S		♦ A K Q 3
			♣ A 10 5

I led the ♠Q, partner signalling an odd number of spades. Declarer won with the king and cashed four diamond tricks, South discarding two spades on the third and fourth diamonds. I discarded a heart. Declarer played a club to the ace and a club to the king. Now I was endplayed with a spade and in the two-card ending I had to lead away from my king of hearts.

Was there anything I could do?

