

# The Slow Lane

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Inspired by the psychic rewards reported by our colleagues who have taken their duplicate boards to prisons, I decided to combine professional and recreational interests by teaching bridge to another trapped group. Mentally retarded people need hobbies too, and few bridge texts or teachers are appropriate for them.

The experience has been good for me, too. My students don't cheat, they are never crabby or sarcastic, and if I can only explain an idea clearly enough, they will eventually learn it. But this learning may require many instances, and of course there is so much to learn. A deal without an error is rare indeed; and although as a teacher I find this disappointing, as a player it lets me work on the important skill of taking advantage of errors.

However, I rarely win. I don't understand why, but let me recount a pair of hands.

## DEAL 1

♠ K8742  
♥ 1098  
♦ 92  
♣ AQ5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A105  
♥ K64  
♦ AJ53  
♣ K97

South	West	North	East
—	Pass	Pass	Pass
1NT	Pass	2♥*	Dble
2♠	Pass	3NT	All Pass

When West led the heart queen, I could be proud of our auction, for clearly four spades would have had no play. However, three no-trumps was no claimer either. I had to duck the heart, and when West continued to East's ace it was clear that a diamond shift would beat me. No, East continued hearts, as West pitched a club. I made a mental note to repeat to East the lesson on the

futility of establishing a suit when one has no entry.

I crossed to dummy's queen and led a spade. East played the queen, and West put the three under my ace. Now what? If East had queen-jack doubleton, of course, I could run the whole suit easily. But surely a singleton queen was more likely, and in that case I had to be careful. If I played my five, West could insert his nine and then duck the next round; the suit would block. To untangle my tricks I had to ram the ten through now. Yes, the ten was the right play, and the vigorish was that if I had guessed correctly I could reiterate the restricted choice argument which had been proving difficult to master.

West duly played his jack on my ten, and I began to smile. But my smile was wiped away when I carelessly won the king of spades and East followed, and I bet you can guess who won the third round of the suit. When I asked East why she had violated the second hand low rule, she said she was trying to win the trick so she could run her hearts. And she did.

♠ K8742  
♥ 1098  
♦ 92  
♣ AQ5

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J3  
♥ Q3  
♦ K1076  
♣ J10862

♠ Q96  
♥ AJ752  
♦ Q84  
♣ 43

♠ A105  
♥ K64  
♦ AJ53  
♣ K97

## DEAL 2

♠ 952  
♥ AK104  
♦ J73  
♣ A109

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ J73  
♥ 6532  
♦ AK  
♣ KJ87

South	West	North	East
—	Pass	Pass	Pass
1♣	1♠	Dble*	Rdble*
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass

Although North showed admirable restraint in not opening the bidding, he couldn't hold back when I showed hearts. So there we were in a hopeless game. Well, not totally hopeless. West led the spade ace, and in response to partner's eight continued the suit to his king. I knew West had erred, because East's negative redouble (everyone here plays that convention) showed a high spade honour. And I knew the reason too; we had drilled on the dangers of underleading aces at Trick 1. Someday we'll get to the exceptions.

East cheerfully got out with a diamond to my ace, and I had a chance. I led a heart to the ten and jack, and the heart exit soon revealed that West had begun life with three hearts headed by the queen. Now if I could only guess clubs...

Did you spot my discovery play? I was proud of it. I knew West had five spades headed by the ace-queen and the queen of hearts. If she had the diamond queen too, then she couldn't have the card I was after. So I called for the jack of diamonds, and when East played low I was just about home. I played a club to the ace and then ran the club ten, and when West took it I was down two. I turned towards West to review counting points again, but when I saw her hand my head swivelled toward East. Why had he failed to cover an honour? "I'm sorry, Dr Weiss, I forgot. Can you give us some more hands on that one?"

♠ 952  
♥ AK104  
♦ J73  
♣ A109

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ AQ1064  
♥ Q87  
♦ 98  
♣ Q62

♠ K8  
♥ J9  
♦ Q106542  
♣ 543

♠ J73  
♥ 6532  
♦ AK  
♣ KJ87