Thanks,

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Cynics often deride the value of 'book learning', but at a recent US National Tournament I was at the table during three deals which might have been extracted from textbooks. Try them as problems, armed with the (unfair?) knowledge that something is afoot.

DEAL 1 - MIXED PAIRS East/West Game. Dealer North.



South West East North 20 3NT All Pass 5-6 diamonds, 8-11 HCP

You lead the ♠6, to dummy's seven, partner's nine and declarer's ace. The ♦3 is led to dummy's king, partner following with the two. Next comes the ♠10, to partner's nine and declarer's four. What is your plan?

In real life you would win the king and return a spade, as did the actual West. But you would have been suckered, because declarer (my partner!) had smoothly reproduced a classic coup,

Our second deal occurred in the Blue Ribbon Pairs, and I blew the defence.

DEAL 2 - BLUE RIBBON PAIRS North/South Game, Dealer North.



South	West	North	East
alle ferbio	A THAN	10	Dble
2	Pass	Pass	20
Pass	Pass	24	Pass
2NT	All Pass		

Partner led the \heartsuit K, which held the trick. He continued with the \heartsuit 5. Declarer, an excellent player, thought for a long time and then called for a small diamond from the table. What should I do?

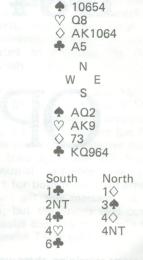
I duly won the queen, cleared hearts and defeated the contract by a trick. This non-effort was worth one matchpoint out of 25. I had missed my magic moment.

There is a trap here. Did you think of winning the $\Diamond A$ instead of the queen? Wrong book! The winning defence was to play the $\bigstar K$ after winning the $\lozenge Q$. This stroke is correct even though South is likely to have, and in fact did have, the \O. (But only because he only has two diamonds. Ed.) If declarer ducks, hearts can be established with an extra trick in hand (for +200), while if he wins the trick, dummy's diamonds are useless and five tricks would appear to be declarer's limit. What I had missed was the opportunity to inflict a double Merrimac Coup on South. Partner's sacrificial king was fortuitous, a simple lead of my suit; but mine would have been an historic gamble. South's hand was:

04 Q32 108 AJ8754

On our third deal, taken from a Swiss Teams match, I did better. We bid the spots off the cards, reaching a slam which was reasonable after the opening lead, and then the contract came home. But not trivially.

DEAL 3 - SWISS TEAMS North/South Game. Dealer South.



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The opening lead was the \$3, which went to the four, king and ace. Now I was home if trumps split 3-3, but East had J-10-x-x. Things were still OK if diamonds behaved well, but I lacked entries to set up the fifth card, so either Q-J doubleton or a 3-3 split was needed.

Unfortunately, East had Q-J-x-x of diamonds, so a routine play problem had become interesting. The position, after the ruff of the third diamond, was:



East had a high diamond and a trump. What would Ottlik and Kelsey

I crossed to dummy's high heart and scored my last trump by ruffing another diamond. If East's oroginal five major. suit cards consisted of three hearts and two spades, he would have to follow suit helplessly while I cashed my winners. If he had only two hearts, then would have to hope that his remaining two spades included the jack. Alas, the he would ruff the third round, and I cards were distributed benignly and I did not get to add the final endplay to the elopement. East held:

♠ K7 ♥ J107 QJ98 J1087