

**Eight Is Low Enough
by Roger Lord**

Dealer: South
Vul: None

North
♠ 742
♥ AQJ7
♦ 863
♣ 754

West
♠ AK98
♥ 43
♦ 752
♣ AJ92

East
♠ QJ53
♥ 982
♦ Q104
♣ Q103

South
♠ 106
♥ K1065
♦ AKJ9
♣ K86

South	West	North	East
1 Diamond	1 Spade	Double	2 Spades
3 Hearts	All Pass		

Contract: 3 Hearts

Opening Lead: Spade Ace

This deal was created to illustrate some defensive techniques.

South opens one diamond. West overcalls one spade. (Overcalling with a good four-card suit is OK at the one-level, whereas a takeout double here would likely bring on unwanted heart bids by partner). North makes a negative double. East raises his partner's spades. South says three hearts, which ends the auction.

The opening lead is the spade ace. Against a suit contract, most players choose the ace when leading from ace-king. East should follow suit with the queen. This signal of the higher of touching honors, when not winning the trick (because a higher honor has already been played), tells West that East can win the next trick, either by ruffing or, in this case, with the jack. By the way, if East's holding were Qx without the jack, he should not play the queen—he should play low and let his partner figure it out.

At trick two, West wants to get East on lead so that East can switch to a club through declarer. He leads the spade eight, which East wins with the jack. Now, what should East do?

To defeat the contract, East starts clubs with the ten. That way, if declarer ducks, East retains the lead and continues clubs for partner to take the second and third club tricks. Instead, if East were to start with the club three, South would duck. West would have to take the trick, and now he would be unable to take the third club trick. If the defenders fail to take three clubs now, declarer could arrange to draw trumps, finesse in diamonds and run diamonds, discarding one of dummy's club losers.

The next question is, how does East know to lead a club rather than a diamond, when both suits appear to be identical? The answer is that the play of a card, high or low, which is not needed for trick-taking, can be a suit-preference signal to show preference between the higher and lower ranking suits in question. Does West's eight show high or low suit preference?

With careful observation, you (East) can determine that the eight, normally a high spot-card, this time is low. For his overcall, West must have two more cards, the king and a spot card. Just one spot-card remains unaccounted for, unplayed or visible in your hand or dummy, and that card is the nine. West must have it—but for his suit preference intent, he played the eight, which is lower than the nine. Lead the club ten and down they go.