

Love Your Intermediates

(Friday mini-lesson – 20 September 2019)

Continuing on from my theme of playing like an expert, some players notice only the pretty **picture** cards when playing or defending a hand, but better players are aware of the **intermediates**.

What are the *intermediates*? - you might be asking. They are the **high spot cards** (that is tens, nines, eights, even sevens, sometimes), as opposed to the low spot cards (twos, threes, fours, fives, and sixes). These are cards that can often be promoted to tricks just like the lower honour cards can.

Let's look at a couple of example hands. You are playing in 4♠ with the following cards to work with, and the K♥ is led:

♠ A Q T
♥ T 9 8 4
♦ T 6 2
♣ J 5 2

♠ K J 9 6 5 3
♥ A
♦ A 5 3
♣ A T 3

You see four losers (two ♦s, and two ♣s). Can you make West regret her obvious top-of-an-honour sequence opening lead?

Because dummy has almost no help for declarer's minor suit losers, the contract is in jeopardy. However, I hope you can see the great potential of *dummy's ♥ intermediates (the 10, 9 and 8)*. Because the K and A of ♥s have been played on the first trick, the remaining ten, nine, and eight in dummy are only surpassed by the opponents' Q and J.

The plan, thus, should be to use dummy's trump entries to play ♥s pitching ♦ losers (that is, loser-on-loser plays) twice, until the third ♥ intermediate is set up as a winner.

So, at trick 2, lead a ♠ to dummy's ten, then play the 10♥ and discard the 3♦ from hand. West will win with the Q♥ and (best) shift to the Q♦, but South is in control. Now, you win the A♦ and lead a second trump to dummy's Q♠, and follow with the 9♥ pitching your last ♦ from hand. Again, West can win, but now when they lead ♦s again, you ruff, get back to dummy with a high ♠ and play the 8♥ to pitch a ♣ loser. Thus, losing only 3 tricks in all. Contract made!

