

## A Tale of Stiff Kings

My hand is: ♠52 ♥J1052 ♦Q109876 ♣K.

I'm actually kind of dozing cause it had been a long week at the bridge table. We are playing in a regional tournament and, as usual, slugging it out in the morning KO's. Now morning is not my thing. I must prefer to wake up whenever I do (without an alarm clock, thank you), have a couple of leisurely cups of coffee, and get a feel for the day before I do anything drastic....or anything at all for that matter.

However, as the opponent's auction proceeds, I do begin to perk up a bit. The opponents are quite hot (vulnerable) and it goes:

LHO	Partner	RHO	Me
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♥	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦*	Pass	5♥	Pass (All change)**

\* One keycard (the five keycards being the four aces and the king of trumps)

\*\*Canadian vernacular for all pass

Now I don't have a particularly good hand but the four trumps may cause the declarer a wee bit of trouble. So, being the disciplined player that I am, I lead my long suit. Since I have this long solid interior sequence, I put the ten of diamonds of the table.

Now dummy hits with: ♠K974 ♥AQ85 ♦void ♣J10942

Hmmmm, I'm thinking. What a piece of junk. Why do people insist upon opening such pieces of garbage? They must have liked the diamond void. Oh, well. Perhaps it works for them.

Anyway, the declarer pitches a spade on my diamond lead and wins the Ace in hand in order to lead a heart to the Queen. And, WOW, my partner wins his stiff King!!! and returns another diamond to declarer's king.

Now is the time to concentrate on willing the declarer to go wrong....which reminds me of a story about Al Roth. He supposedly reamed out his partner one time for "not willing the declarer to go wrong" when the declarer had to guess the location of the Queen of a suit in order to make his contract. Well if it works for Al, maybe it will work for me.

Sure enough, it works. Declarer now leads a heart to the Ace and is extremely disgusted when my partner shows out. Now abandoning trumps, declarer leads the Jack of clubs from the dummy and.....you guessed it.....played small.

In with my King of clubs, I now get to cash the two good hearts, extracting all their trumps and play off four good diamond tricks to set this contract 6 tricks. Plus 600! In all, we took 8 tricks.....two stiff kings, two more trumps and four diamonds.

The complete hand was:

	Dummy	
	♠ K976	
	♥ AQ83	
	♦ -	
	♣ J10965	
Me		Partner
♠ 52		♠ J10843
♥ J1052		♥ K
♦ Q109876		♦ J432
♣ K		♣ 872
	Declarer	
	♠ AQ	
	♥ 9764	
	♦ AK5	
	♣ AQ43	

Of course I like this result. But I can't help but wonder what will happen at the other table. We finish the round and wander out to the hall to wait for our teammates. They finally finish and we compare scores. To my elation we win lots of imps on this particular board cause our teammates are plus 680. At the other table our declarer teammate dropped both stiff Kings. Way to go!

There are a few valuable lessons to be learned from this hand:

(1) From defenders point of view it is usually correct to lead from length in a suit when holding a trump stack. Trying for ruffs will more than likely help declarer.

(2) From LHO's point of view....perhaps better opening hands would be in order!

(3) From RHO's point of view....be careful about making slam tries holding bad trumps as partner rarely has exactly the cards you need him to have. Also if you play with partner's who like to bid a little light, you need to be a little more subtle in your slam tries.

(4) At IMPS, holding bad trumps and having no information to go on, playing a trump to the Ace is not all that bad of an idea. If this wins and no honors appear, return to your hand and lead another small heart and see what happens.

(5) You might well apply the Law of Symmetry, which here is that if there is one stiff King out, there might very well be another.

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