

349. Plum Meredith

Playing in a high-level team game against world-class opponents, I hold as South:

♠ K 6 2 ♥ A K 6 ♦ J 9 8 ♣ A 5 3 2

With neither side vulnerable, our side reaches **three notrump** after this auction:

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the ♠5 and partner puts down a reasonable dummy:

♠ A Q 8 4
♥ J 9 5
♦ 5 4 2
♣ K 10 7

5♠ led

♠ K 6 2
♥ A K 6
♦ J 9 8
♣ A 5 3 2

On the opening lead, East plays the ♠10 and I win the king. Applying the Rule of Eleven, it appears that the ♠10 is East's only spade higher than the five. If so, I have a fourth spade and eight tricks but not very good prospects except through help from the defenders

So I keep my designs to myself by leading the jack of diamonds from hand. West wins the queen, thinks momentarily, and continues the nine of spades to dummy's queen as East discards a heart. I keep faith with my earlier strategy by leading another diamond to West's ten. West is not inclined to help me; he produces a third spade, won in dummy as East throws a second heart

My best chance is still a squeeze or endplay, so I persist with diamonds. East plays the king but West overtakes the ace, and drives out dummy's last spade as East throws a third heart.

I have a discard to make on this trick. To maintain flexibility I throw a heart. I cross to hand with the king of hearts, and lead a club to the ten and East's jack. East returns a club.

It is decision time. Were clubs three-three when I must win in dummy and take the next three tricks in my hand? Or was East originally 1=5=3=4,

when he has stiffed his queen of hearts to keep three clubs? Is East that good? I decide he is.

I win the second round of clubs in hand with the ace and cash the ace of hearts, studying the defenders hearts carefully. West follows and East drops the queen! Dummy is left with the ♣K and the good jack of hearts—nine tricks and 400 points under the old total-point scoring method.

The full deal:

<p style="margin-left: 40px;">♠ A Q 8 4 ♥ J 9 5 ♦ 5 4 2 ♣ K 10 7</p> <p>♠ J 9 7 5 3 ♥ 10 4 ♦ A Q 10 3 ♣ Q 8</p> <p style="margin-left: 40px;">♠ K 6 2 ♥ A K 6 ♦ J 9 8 ♣ A 5 3 2</p>	<p style="margin-left: 40px;">♠ 10 ♥ Q 8 7 3 2 ♦ K 7 6 ♣ J 9 6 4</p>
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West can defeat the contract by rising with the ♣Q on the tenth trick, but he was perhaps exhausted by his sterling play up to that point.

This was an early deal from the 1955 Bermuda Bowl in which Britain became the first country in the modern era to defeat the United States in World Championship bridge play. The British declarer was Adam Meredith, called "Plum". He was particularly noted for his spade psyches, but he was otherwise a brilliant strategist with a heavy bent into the psychological game. In his obituary, it was noted that Reese and Schapiro anchored one table in the 1955 WCs, while Meredith anchored the other, playing with three other teammates. This was perhaps the strangest pairing in bridge history.

The East player was the US's Billy Rosen, who in 1954 became the youngest World Champion at age 25, until Bobby Levin and more recently Agustin Madala. After winning a McKenney trophy, two Spingolds, two major pair events, two team trials, and a first and second in the Bermuda Bowl, Rosen left big-time bridge, married, established himself as an options trader, and raised a family. Last month he was named the Bridge Hall of Fame, a worthy choice.