



Pat Harrington

The case of the crummy dummy

Good defense requires good detective work. This month we'll look at two hands that were defended by the clever pair, Detective Read and Count Signals. In both cases, the contract was 3NT by South after South opened a strong 2♣ and rebid 2NT.

Assist Detective Read (East) on defense in our first case:

<i>Dummy</i>	
♠	8 7 4
♥	6 2
♦	7 5 3 2
♣	K Q J 6
<i>East</i>	
♠	6 3 2
♥	K 9 8 7
♦	9 6
♣	A 7 5 4

The ♠Q is led. Sitting in Detective Read's seat, what would your defensive plan be after seeing declarer win the opening lead with the king and lead the ♣10 from his hand, West following with the 2?

Unable to completely get away from his job, Detective Read immediately dubbed this deal "The Case of the Crummy Dummy." He saw a weak dummy with only one source of tricks – the club suit. His solution was to try to keep declarer from using those club tricks, so he

Play & Learn

held up the ♣A. Declarer continued at trick three with the ♣3, West following with the 8. Did Detective Read win this trick?

He did, and 3NT went down one. Declarer would have made 3NT if the detective had not won the second club with his ace. A few deals later, Read was ready to call the director, thinking he had the same hand but he noticed dummy's clubs were a bit different.

Dummy

♠	8 7 4
♥	6 2
♦	7 5 3 2
♣	K Q 6 3

East

♠	6 3 2
♥	K 9 8 7
♦	9 6
♣	A 7 5 4

Again, West led the ♠Q, won by declarer's king, but this time, declarer led the ♣J from hand at trick two, West following with the ♣9. Again, the detective refused to win the first club trick, and declarer continued with the ♣10. What did Detective Read play on this second club trick?

The Detective played low and 3NT went down one. Declarer would have made 3NT if the detective had won the second club lead with his ace. Read and Signals won with a big game. As they were leaving, Detective Read was heard to tell the Count, "I couldn't have done it without you, partner."

How could a play be correct one time and incorrect the next time? How does East know when to take the ♣A? East couldn't have gotten it right without his partner's help.

The difference is *the number of clubs held by declarer*. On our first deal, declarer had only two clubs. To cut declarer off from dummy, East had to hold up on winning the ♣A only one time. On the second deal, declarer held three clubs and East had to play the ♣A on declarer's third and last club. The secret to solving "The Case of the Crummy Dummy" was for East to know how many clubs declarer had. Since declarer wasn't about to tell, it was up to West to give count. A high-low count signal shows an even number of clubs and a low-high count signal shows an odd number of clubs. Once East knew the number of clubs in West's hand, East could count to 13 to know how many clubs declarer had.

In the first case, Count Signals followed first with the 2 and then with the 8 to show an odd number of clubs. That allowed his partner to deduce that declarer had only two clubs. In Case 2, the Count signaled high-low with the 9 followed by the 2 and his partner deduced that declarer had three clubs. □

Brief encounter

Augie Boehm once directed a duplicate game on a cruise ship. Player 1 showed up on the first day without a partner. Boehm suggested she play with Player 2 and that they chat to see if they were compatible.

Soon after, Player 1 was gone. Boehm says the conversation apparently went like this: Player 1: "Do you play strong twos or weak?" Player 2: "Is there a difference?" Player 1 went to the movies.