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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 25 BRIDGE

The theory of probabilities

South dealer.

Both sides vulnerable.

NORTH

♠ 8 6 2
♥ 10 8 5
♦ K 8 3
♣ 9 7 6 4

WEST

♠ J 10 9 7
♥ A 7
♦ J 4 2
♣ Q 8 3 2

EAST

♠ Q 3
♥ 9 6 4 3 2
♦ Q 10 7 5
♣ 10 5

SOUTH

♠ A K 5 4
♥ K Q J
♦ A 9 6
♣ A K J

The bidding:

South West North East

3 NT Pass Pass Pass

Opening lead — jack of spades.

Bridge is a game of probabilities. You make a certain bid because you think it has a better chance to succeed than any other bid. You make a certain play because you think it is more likely to work than any other.

But a probability is not a certainty. All you can do in bridge is rely on the percentages and hope for the best. You may be wrong in a particular case, but in the long run you'll be right more often.

All of which leads to the proper play of today's deal, which is strictly a matter of percentages. Let's say

you win the spade lead with the king and play the king of hearts. West takes the ace and returns a spade to your ace.

You have eight certain tricks and two ways to try for a ninth. You can cross to dummy with a diamond and take a club finesse. If the jack wins, you are home. You have about a 50-50 chance of making the contract this way, but in the actual deal, this approach would fail.

The alternate line of play is to cash the A-K of clubs and then play the jack. This approach succeeds if the clubs are divided 3-3 or if either the queen or ten falls when the A-K are led. The diamond king provides the entry to dummy if the club nine becomes a trick.

Some knowledge of percentages is required to know which of the two lines of play has the greater chance of success.

The second approach is much better. The clubs will break 3-3 about 36% of the time, while a singleton or doubleton queen or ten will occur in approximately one deal out of three. The combined chance of the clubs dividing 3-3 or otherwise favorably divided comes to about 70% — 20% better than the finesse.

Playing the A-K-J of clubs is therefore the superior line of play and succeeds in the actual deal.

Tomorrow: A challenge: Try to make it.

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Horoscope

FOR WEDNESDAY

ARIES (March 21-April 19) This is the best day of the year to make resolutions about how to improve your home or where you live, as well as how to improve your family relationships. This is most fitting, because this year, you will improve where you live, or you'll move somewhere else that you prefer. Definitely! Tonight: Home and family.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) The New Moon each month gives us a chance to set intentions and make resolutions. Today's New Moon is all about your daily habits and ability to communicate to your daily contacts, especially siblings and relatives. Think about this. How can you improve your daily surroundings? How can you improve your daily communications? Tonight: Discussions.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Today's New Moon takes place in your Money House. This gives you a marvelous opportunity to think about moneymaking ideas, along with possible ways to improve your assets and your wealth, as well as ways to take care of what you already own. Give this some thought, because you will get richer this year! Tonight: Check your belongings.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Today the only New Moon in your sign all year is giving you the chance to take a realistic look in the mirror and check out the impression you make on your world. What do you see? How can you improve your image? Wardrobe changes, haircut, shoes -- ideas? Tonight: Socialize.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) The New Moon today is in a hidden part of your chart, which means you will have a chance to think about your spiritual values and ways to improve your life in intangible, subtle ways. In what areas are your most self-defeating? Tonight: Enjoy solitude.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) We are gregarious creatures. We need to go out to see others, and we need to be seen. Today's New Moon takes place in your House of Friendships, which is your chance to think about how you might improve your relations with friends and groups. Tonight: Be friendly.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) The New Moon today makes you high-viz. People will notice you more than usual. This placement also gives you a chance to think about your style of relating to the authority figures in your life -- parents, bosses, teachers and the police. Any insights? Tonight: You're admired.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) Each month the New Moon is our chance to make resolutions. Today's New Moon wants you to make travel plans, plus explore opportunities related to the law, medicine, publishing and higher education. How can you expand your world? Tonight: Explore!

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Today is an excellent time to think of ways to improve how you deal with shared property and anything that you own jointly with someone else. This includes credit card debt, loans and mortgages. What can you do to improve these areas? Tonight: Check your finances.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Today the only New Moon that takes place opposite your sign all year is happening. This is a great opportunity to see how to improve your closest relationships. Ideas? Listening better? Reducing criticism and expectations? Increased appreciation? What do you think? Tonight: Cooperate.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) This year you will have many opportunities to improve your health as well as your job. And if you can't improve your current job, you'll get a better job. This is encouraging! Today's New Moon is the perfect time to think about how to make this happen. Tonight: Work.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) The rest of this year promotes social diversions, fun activities with children, romance, vacations and chances to explore your creative talents. Today's New Moon urges you to begin this process. Plan for fun and enjoyment ahead! Tonight: Play!

2025 KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

new today in classified

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SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

9					5			6
			5		8			7
								3
8					1			
	9						2	
1					2	9	3	
	3			7	6	8		
	6		9				7	
	7		4			3		2

Difficulty: ★★★★★

7/25

Answer to previous puzzle

3	4	7	2	5	8	9	6	1
2	9	1	6	7	3	8	4	5
6	8	5	4	1	9	3	7	2
4	5	3	8	2	7	6	1	9
7	2	8	9	6	1	5	3	4
9	1	6	5	3	4	2	8	7
1	6	9	7	8	2	4	5	3
5	7	4	3	9	6	1	2	8
8	3	2	1	4	5	7	9	6

Difficulty: ★★★

7/24

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