

A LOGOLOGICAL GAME OF BRIDGE

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In a game of contract bridge, the four players are assigned the names North, East, South and West, corresponding to their seats around a bridge table. Among the 52 playing cards, from the Spade Ace to the Club Two, which 13 are most appropriate for North to hold? Which 13 for East? For South? For West? The Spade Ace shares no letters with North, three letters with East (eas), one letter with South (s), and two letters with West (es). So, it is logologically appropriate to assign the Spade Ace to East.

If one similarly analyzes the letter overlaps of the remaining 51 cards for each of the four players, one discovers that East and the Spade suit are made for each other; they always share the letters eas. In fact, East possesses a greater overlap with eleven Spade cards than does North, West or South. For the Spade Four, East and South both have three overlaps (eas, sou), and for the Spade Two, East and West both have four overlaps (east, west). In addition to the eleven spades, East has the greatest number of overlaps for the Heart Six (east) and the Club Ace (ae). Since the 13 East cards have now been completely determined, one assigns the Spade Two to West and the Spade Four to South instead.

North and the Heart suit are soul mates, sharing the letters thr. However, this dominance is not as overwhelming; for East also shares three letters with Heart (eat). One finds that North has the greatest number of overlaps with the Heart King, Queen, Ten, Nine, Eight and Two. Similarly, North shares two letters with Diamond, more than any other player does, and consequently gets to hold the Diamond King, Jack, Ten, Eight, Three and Two, filling his hand with the requisite 13 cards.

South shares one letter with Club (u), and the other players have no matches with this suit. As a result, South picks up the Club Eight, the Club Six and the Club Two. Since both East and North have complete sets of cards, it is time to go back through the unassigned cards of the deck to see which ones have more South overlaps than West ones. There are nine of these: Spade Four, Heart Four, Diamond Queen, Diamond Six, Club King, Club Queen, Club Jack, Club Four and Club Three.

Twelve of the 13 cards to be assigned South have now been identified, and we have already assigned the Spade Two to West. There are 13 cards not yet assigned, one of which must go to South and the rest to West: Heart Ace, Heart Jack, Heart Seven, Heart Five, Heart Three, Diamond Ace, Diamond Nine, Diamond Seven, Diamond Five, Club Ten, Club Nine, Club Seven and Club Five.

If the Heart Ace is assigned to West, then East-West have a laydown Seven Spades contract. However, this contract can be safely bid only if East-West have a bidding convention to determine which ace West has. If West does not have the Heart Ace they must stop at Six.

This article was inspired by "The Blind Card-Player" on page kj of Battus's *Opperlans! Taal- & Letterkunde* (Querido, 2002), in which the same exercise is performed in Dutch.