

Four top players from the United States competed in the 1982 World Pairs Championship.

On this deal sitting South was Lew Stansby, playing with Chip Martel. Their opponents were Eric Rodwell and Jeff Meckstroth, known for their aggressive bidding.

Stansby picked up this hand as dealer: ♠ 6 4 2 ♥ 9 3 2 ♦ 10 7 4 ♣ A K 7 6. His side was not vulnerable, and the opponents were.

Stansby passed, Rodwell, West, opened 1♦ and Martell overcalled 1♥. Meckstroth, East, then made a negative double, and the auction was back to Stansby.

Stansby then advanced 2♥ and Rodwell bid 2♠. Martell then bid 3♦. This showed interest in reaching game with some values in diamonds since West's opening could be a three-card suit.

Meckstroth jumped to 4♠.

Stansby had to decide what to do after these developments. With only 7 HCP, he might have passed, however partner had showed interest in game and Stansby had what looked like two tricks on defence, the ♣A -K. Also, East – West were known to be very aggressive in the auction, so Stansby chose to double for penalty, partly as a warning to partner not to bid any higher.

Everyone passed and Rodwell was the declarer in 4♠ X, with Martel on lead.

Possible Defence: before we see how Stansby and Martel defended the deal, let's suppose you are sitting south. Partner leads the ♣8, and East puts down the dummy.

♠ Q J 9 8
♥ A J 7
♦ 2
♣ Q J 10 9 3

♠ 6 4 2
♥ 9 3 2
♦ 10 7 4
♣ A K 7 6

The ♣9 is played from dummy and you play the ♣K, third hand high, but only as high as necessary.

You win the first trick, now what?

Partner has bid hearts and diamonds and presumably has two spades since West did not open 1♠. Partner's lead of the ♣8 is likely a singleton or the top of a doubleton. In that case you have a second club trick and may be able to give partner a club ruff.

You continue with the ♣A at trick two, it wins the trick with declarer following with a low club, partner shows out, discarding the ♥10. Partner did indeed start with a singleton club.

You are at a critical point in the defence, what are you playing at trick three? It seems reasonable to continue with a third round of clubs, lets see what happens if you do.

You lead a club and partner ruffs with a low spade. That's the first three tricks to the defence, a good start.

Partner now leads the ♥K and dummy's ♥A wins the trick.

Next dummy's ♠Q is led. You play low and declarer makes a surprise move by playing the ♠A, dropping your partner's now singleton ♠K!

How did declarer know to do that?

You passed originally and have now shown up with the ♣A and ♣K. You also raised to only 2♥.

Declarer can figure out that your partner likely holds all the missing high cards, so knew there was no point in taking the spade finesse. The only hope for declarer was North's ♠K to fall under the ♠A.

Declarer draws your remaining two trumps, takes one of dummy's established club winners and discards a heart from declarer's hand, dummy's other club is also a winner on which declarer discards a diamond and now ruffs one of dummy's hearts. Declarer then takes a trick with a high diamond and plays another high diamond, discarding dummy's last heart. Declarer has the last trick with dummy's last trump.

4♠ is made, your side only took two clubs and a club ruff. Could the contract have been defeated?

Full Deal:

	♠ K 3	
	♥ K Q 10 5 4	
	♦ Q J 9 6 3	
	♣ 8	
♠ A 10 7 5		♠ Q J 9 8
♥ 8 6		♥ A J 7
♦ A K 8 5		♦ 2
♣ 5 4 2		♣ Q J 10 9 3
	♠ 6 4 2	
	♥ 9 3 2	
	♦ 10 7 4	
	♣ A K 7 6	

When Stansby and Martel were defending the contract, the defence started the same way.

Martel led the singleton ♣8, and Stansby won the trick. Stansby continued with the ♣A at trick two, confirming partner had started with a singleton club. On this trick, however, Martel's discard was the ♥10, an encouraging attitude signal in hearts. Before automatically giving partner a club ruff, Stansby considered partner's ♥10 carefully. Partner had obviously led the singleton club hoping to get a club ruff to defeat the contract, so why would partner be making an encouraging signal in hearts?

Stansby came to the conclusion that partner had changed his mind! After seeing dummy, and the play to the first two tricks, partner no longer wanted a club ruff, if he had wanted a club ruff he would have simply played a low heart or low diamond.

Trusting partner, Stansby switched to a heart, he played the ♥9, top of nothing.

Martel played the ♥Q and declarer won with the ♥A.

A spade was led from dummy to declarer's ♠A, hoping to drop North's ♠K, however the ♠K didn't fall. Declarer still had to lose a trick to Martel's ♠K.

On gaining the lead Martel took a trick with the ♥K which was the fourth trick for the defence.

Declarer had the rest of the tricks, but it didn't matter, the contract was down one.

Stansby and Martel took two clubs, one spade and **one heart trick**.

Martel made the opening lead before seeing dummy, he was hoping the ♠A would be in dummy and partner might hold the ♣A and ♥A. Once dummy came down without the ♠A, and partner won the first trick with the ♣K, Martel could see what was about to happen if partner continued with clubs.

Rodwell, a world class declarer, would figure out to drop his then singleton ♠K and discard a heart loser on dummy's established clubs.

So when Stansby took a trick with the ♣A, Martel sent the message: "please lead me a heart".

Stansby trusted his partner's signal. Changing the defensive plan in the middle of play requires both partners to be aware of what is going on and to trust one and other to "do the right thing"

That's what makes a world class partnership!

How important was it for Stansby and Martel to defeat the 4♠ contract? By defeating that contract they won the gold medal at the World Pairs Championship - had they failed to defeat the contract, their opponents Rodwell and Meckstroth, would have won the championship instead!

Lew Stansby and his long time partner Chip Martel have had many successes. In total Lew Stansby has won seven world championships and was inducted into the ACBL Hall of Fame in 2001.

He claims to have met most of his friends playing bridge and remembers playing bridge with Mike Lawrence while in college. "You might say we majored in bridge".