

bridge

"How can I get better," is a lament that bridge teachers will often hear.

Bill Root was a great character on the American bridge scene, both as a player and a teacher. He won 14 national championships and when he was inducted into the American Bridge Hall of Fame in 1997, his citation read that he was perhaps the best-known bridge teacher in the world. It also said that he has probably taught the game to more people than anyone in history. His classes always pulled big numbers, up and down the East Coast of the US. He also stood out for more than just his bridge. He was 6'9" in height, lean and straight.

I had the pleasure of playing on a team with Root in a US national in the mid-1990s when he was in his mid-70s. He died in 2002, aged 79. After each session, the team would repair to a bar to go through the hands, as bridge players do, but I would grab Bill and we would talk about teaching, which is also my passion. When I asked him what he says to newbies who are crying out for help, he said: "I tell them to start every day by going directly to the bathroom, stand in front of the mirror and practice saying no bid."

Today's deal comes from Root's book, *How to Play a Bridge Hand*. West leads the four of hearts against three notrumps.

	NORTH		
	♠ AK7		
	♥ 872		
	♦ 543		
	♣ 10964		
WEST		South deals, both sides vulnerable	EAST
♠ 9			♠ QJ1064
♥ Q10643			♥ 95
♦ Q1092			♦ J8
♣ KJ5			♣ 8732
	SOUTH		
	♠ 8532		
	♥ AKJ		
	♦ AK76		
	♣ AQ		

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
—	—	—	2NT
Pass	3NT	All pass	

You can count three hearts tricks, two spades, two diamonds and a club for a total of eight. The extra trick could come from a 3-3 break in diamonds or spades. Failing that, there is always the club finesse. How would you play?

Hopefully, you looked a little deeper. The contract is guaranteed without any even breaks or finesses. Just win the lead and play the ace and queen of clubs. They can win the king, but you win the return and cross to dummy in spades to lead the 10 of clubs. This establishes the nine as your ninth trick. They cannot stop you.

Paul Marston