

March 2015

This hand was played by Bruce Wang on BBO but after all the good advice I gave you last month I'm hoping you can put it to good use this month as West

Bidding

No one vulnerable

West	N	E	S	W
♠ A54			1S	pass
♥ 864	1NT(1)	pass	2C	pass
♦ 752	3S	pass	4S	pass
♣ J642				

N-S are playing 2 over 1 so the 1NT was forcing and 2C may be as short as three. A Diamond or a Heart may prove to be the best lead but in the hope of reducing ruffing potential in dummy you start with a small Spade.

Dummy goes down with the following hand

♠ J109
♥ K10
♦ KJ93
♣ K1085

Declarer wins the first trick in dummy and plays a second Spade, partner following. You win this trick.

Plan your defence.

Initial Analysis

It's disconcerting that Declarer likes the way you're thinking and continues to draw trumps. It feels right to play another trump, and maybe it is. But before we do anything, let's think about this hand because after we play our next card we have no further role to play in the defence. What do we know about this hand so far? We know for certain that declarer started with 5 Spades to the KQ and at least 3 Clubs. Let's assume for simplicity that he started with a 5-2-2-4 distribution. If he started with 4 Clubs to the Ace he will pick up 4 tricks in that suit for he knows if one or other of the defenders started with a singleton it will be your partner as you failed to lead a Club. If your partner started with a singleton Queen and declarer understands what restricted choice is all about (and this is Bruce so he will) then he will play you for the Jack. There's something neat about this hand. We know where all the Kings are. We also know where 3 of the Jacks are and the

one that is missing, the HJ we don't care about as it plays no role in this hand wherever it is. So the defence is all about Aces and Queens. There are three Aces and Queens unaccounted for, making up between them 18 points. Declarer will need at least 8 of these points to justify his raise to game which means the most your partner can hold is 10 points. If this is so he could conceivably have one Ace and three Queens or Two Aces and one Queen. I'm going to concentrate on the latter holding for a very good reason, if the former then I think this contract will always make. We need him to hold 2 Aces and a Queen for this contract to have a chance of going down. What's more, we need the Queen to be in the same suit as one of his Aces. If partner holds the AQ of Clubs (highly unlikely) or AQ of Diamonds then you can close your eyes and pick out a card at random as Declarer has no way of avoiding losing tricks in these suits. But what if he holds the AQ of Hearts? We need to switch to a Heart now or he will discard a Heart loser on the Diamonds. Is this plan foolproof? Of course not, but as we said last month much better to have a plan than have no plan at all.

Here is the full deal

N		
	♠ J109	
	♥ K10	
	♦ KJ93	
	♣ K1085	
W		E
♠ A54		♠ 63
♥ 864		♥ AQ9732
♦ 752		♦ 863
♣ J642		♣ A9
S		
	♠ KQ872	
	♥ J5	
	♦ AQ10	
	♣ Q73	

Well, we diagnosed the hand incorrectly but the operation was a success! At the table West continued with a passive defence by returning a third trump. Bruce won this in Dummy and played four rounds of Diamonds discarding a Club from hand. He then played a Club from Dummy and East was snookered. If he ducks Bruce will simply play another Club and East will have to lead away from his HAQ. At the table East did his best by going up with his Ace but Bruce was up to the challenge and simply dropped his Queen under this and the hand was over.

Conclusion

This is another simple example of asking oneself where are our tricks coming from? And once you come up with a plausible answer to this question, taking the appropriate action. Some of you will argue that East couldn't possibly hold this hand as he would surely bid 2H over 1NT? All I can answer is that you clearly have not spent much time on BBO playing with experts!