

August 2015

Again I am playing on BBO with a group of experts when this hand comes along

Bidding

No one vulnerable S deals

West	W	N	E	S
♠ K95				3H
♥ 76	pass	4H	all pass	
♦ KJ62				
♣ AJ108				

When declarers announce weak hands I like to make attacking leads so I start with the ♦2

Dummy goes down with the following hand

♠ A872
♥ A8
♦ Q10754
♣ K5

Partner goes up with the Ace, declarer dropping the 9. Partner now goes into a huddle and then leads the ♣2

Plan your defence.

Initial Analysis

This is the problem with playing with so called experts on BBO – many of them aren't. Of all the returns my partner could have made this is the most unwelcome. If declarer started with seven hearts to the king he now has nine tricks on top and only needs to ruff his third club for his tenth trick. A heart return from partner was fairly obvious unless of course he holds the king. In that case why not switch to a spade? If he started with Q10x (x) in this suit I suppose he might be worried that declarer held J9x in which case a spade switch would cost us a trick. Is it possible he holds the ♥K and Q10 x in spades? On the other hand perhaps he started with 6 clubs and he's trying to warn me that if I don't win this trick first time round we won't make any tricks in this suit. I make a mental note to blacklist him from my list of preferred expert players. In the meantime I have to plan the defence. Can I save the situation? The only reasonable explanation I can come up with is that he does indeed hold the ♥K. Is it possible that declarer started with 8 hearts and my partner's king is singleton? If that's the case then if I win this trick and switch to a heart he might smell a rat and go up with his ace. But he will surely play his ace anyway as he

needs the second heart to ruff his third club in dummy unless he is an expert of the same calibre that my partner seems to be. I win with the ♣A and shift to a heart.

Final Analysis

Sometimes a hand comes along that is so extraordinarily beautiful that you want to frame it and hang it up in your living room. This is such a hand. Had I asked myself the simple question “what does my partner know about this hand that I don’t?” I might have found the correct defence at the table. Let’s ask this question now and defend the hand again. It is true that partner knows what cards he holds in hearts and spades but more importantly he knows exactly how many diamonds declarer started with. Let’s say declarer started with a singleton diamond as I had assumed. In that case my partner will return a heart to remove ruffing power from dummy. But what if declarer is false carding and started with two diamonds? Then my partner will switch to spades as he realizes we must set up a spade trick before declarer can set up a diamond winner for a discard. But what if declarer started with three diamonds? Then partner must switch to a small club asking for a diamond ruff. I’ve never seen this play before where West can inform his partner how best to defend the hand based on which suit he returns. It seems to be a close cousin of the alarm clock play which featured in our April article, where partner makes an extraordinary play in an attempt to shake us out of our complacency. I don’t know if it has a name, but it is a remarkable play just the same.

I apologize to my partner for failing to find the defence at the table. He doesn’t reply. I suspect he is too busy blacklisting my name from his list of preferred expert players.

Here is the full deal

	N	
	♠ A872	
	♥ A8	
	♦ Q10754	
	♣ K5	
W		E
♠ K95		♠ QJ643
♥ 76		♥ 94
♦ KJ62		♦ A
♣ AJ108		♣ Q9642
	S	
	♠ 10	
	♥ KQJ10532	
	♦ 983	
	♣ 73	

Conclusion

We all know in our hearts that we will never find a bridge partner who actually plays the game better than we do. Even at the best of times partners are totally untrustworthy and will do things at the table that will have you pulling out your hair. We on the other hand rarely make mistakes. But just sometimes they are going to get things exactly right and when that happens we are going to be caught out. I know this is difficult for you to do but if there is a lesson to be learnt from this month's hand it is

TRUST YOUR PARTNER!