

June 2016

I am sitting South in the teams event of the GBU mini congress when I pick up this hand

Bidding

Dealer North

No one vul

South

	W	N	E	S
♠ KQ73		1C	pass	1S
♥ A72	pass	3S	pass	4S
♦ 76	all pass			
♣ 8652				

West leads the ♥K and dummy goes down with the following

North

♠ A1065
♥ 95
♦ K10
♣ AK973

South

♠ KQ72
♥ A72
♦ 76
♣ 8652

Partner has found a good aggressive raise to 3S so let's try our best to not let him down. Plan your play.

Analysis

If both spades and clubs break we have 11 tricks on top. We will win this trick, draw trumps then start on clubs. Even if these break 3-1 we will come to 10 tricks if the ♦A is well placed. Playing matchpoints one wants to make as many tricks as possible but here the challenge is to make our contract even when the lay of cards is unkind, so we will have to give more thought to this hand. If the spades are 4-1 we will need the clubs to break. So perhaps the correct play is to win this trick and cash the ♠K and ♠Q playing West for 4 spades to the jack. Now if we draw all four trumps we make our contract. If however West shows out on the second round we will need to play a diamond towards table hoping West has the ace, and still rely on the clubs breaking to bring home 10 tricks. Can we do better? What if the clubs are 3-1? If this is the case and the spades

break, we can draw three rounds of trumps then play three rounds of clubs, but the defence will now cash a winning heart in West's hand who will play a diamond through dummy and the contract will depend on who holds the ♦A. What's more likely, spades breaking 4-1 or clubs breaking 3-1? Exactly, it's the bad club break we need to protect ourselves against. How do we do that? We start by ducking the first trick as we need to break communications between these guys. Can we encourage West to continue with hearts? Yes we can. I'll let you into a little secret here, drop the ♥7 on the first trick. If you're playing against a poor player the card you play will make absolutely no difference to what he plays next as he's not looking at your or his partner's cards and therefore cannot be fooled. If you're playing against a good player he will notice that the ♥2 is missing and suspect it is with his partner who has started an encouraging peter. With a bit of luck he might not think you are devious enough to false card. False carding is not illegal. Get into the habit of making life as difficult as possible for your opponents to read your holding by hiding small cards (and sometimes big cards) from them. At the table I am playing against a good player. I can tell he smells a rat, but he is reluctant to switch to a diamond and continues with a heart and now I am almost home. I win this trick then play a small spade to the ace followed by a spade back to my king. If either defender shows out we will make another plan but when both follow I draw the last trump and play a club to the table. When West plays a small club on this I insert the ♣9 and it's all over for the defence. East wins but no return from him will stop me making 10 tricks.

Here is the full deal

	North	
	♠ A1065	
	♥ 95	
	♦ K10	
	♣ AK973	
West		East
♠ J83		♠ 94
♥ KQJ8		♥ 10654
♦ Q843		♦ AJ92
♣ Q4		♣ J10
	South	
	♠ KQ72	
	♥ A72	
	♦ 76	
	♣ 8652	

Conclusion

At the other table they make 11 tricks so we lose 1imp on this board. But no worries, this is a small price to pay and over the long haul finding safety plays like the above will pay big dividends. Could we have combined the first line of play we thought of, 4 spades with

West, and this line? No, because to execute the club safety play we need to be in hand when the third spade is played. But we would only have lost out to this holding if the clubs break and East holds the ♦A.

So the lesson today is that when you are playing teams ask yourself always what can go wrong, and can you find a solution? Safety plays crop up more often than we realize.