

## June 2017

The South African congress as always was a pleasure to attend, an opportunity to meet with old friends and make new ones at the largest annual gathering of bridge players in the country. This year it was held in beautiful Cape Town and whilst the Capetonians were desperately praying for rain those of us who escaped for a while the bitter cold of Gauteng enjoyed an Indian summer of hot cloudless days and warm balmy nights. And then of course, there was the bridge.

Certain hands rewarded good technique and I will feature some of these over the coming months.

Hands transposed for simplicity.

### SSN 1 Board 4

#### North

♠ AQ2  
♥ AK74  
♦ A102  
♣ 986

#### South

♠ 865  
♥ 653  
♦ QJ984  
♣ AK

I imagine that practically everybody played this hand in 3NT by North which is something of a no brainer, but this hand really lights up if you end up in 5D.

West leads the ♣Q which you win in hand with the Ace. Next you play the ♦Q from hand everyone following low. When you try a small diamond next, West goes up with the King, you cover with the Ace and East follows.

We are now down to the following position, plan your play

### North

♠ AQ2  
♥ AK74  
♦ 10  
♣ 98

### South

♠ 865  
♥ 653  
♦ J98  
♣ K

#### Initial Analysis

This seems a simple case of combining our chances; if the hearts break 3-3 or the ♠K is onside we will make our contract, and most players will think no further than that. But there is an additional chance which costs you nothing to try and makes this hand rather special – can you see what it is?

#### Final Analysis

If East has exactly four hearts we could engineer to throw him in to lead spades for us if he started with a 4-4-3-2 or 3-4-3-3 distribution, so let's draw the last trump overtaking with the jack in hand and try a small heart. As we hoped, West plays the ♥2 on this allowing us to play small from dummy (if West had played a higher card we would have won in dummy, returned to hand with a club and tried another heart – we need to keep West off lead else he might switch to a spade and spoil our plans). East wins this trick and exits with a club. We win this with the King, play a heart to the King, ruff a club on which East discards a spade and then play another heart to the Ace. When West shows out on this trick we know for sure that East started with a 4-4-3-2 distribution so we exit with the last heart, throw a small spade from hand and claim the balance.

Here is the full hand

### North

♠ AQ2  
♥ AK74  
♦ 10  
♣ 98

**West**

♠ J97  
♥ J2  
♦ K3  
♣ QJ10742

**East**

♠ K1043  
♥ Q1098  
♦ 765  
♣ 53

**South**

♠ 865  
♥ 653  
♦ QJ984  
♣ AK

**Conclusion**

The extra chance was slim but on this hand it brought home the bacon as the initial and more obvious line of play would have failed. By keeping the dangerous hand West out of the action we gave ourselves some time to explore the hand more fully and use the information we gleaned to our advantage.