

## October 2017

“Counting cards can be a blessing, but sometimes it can be a curse” says Sid. We are having a coffee and discussing the hands we played in a Pairs event at the club earlier in the afternoon. This is quite a deep observation from my friend Sid, so I look again at the hand he is referring to. Here it is, Sid is sitting West

### Bidding

**Board 8**  
**Dealer West**  
**None vul.**

West	W	N	E	S
♠ 965	pass	1NT	4H	4S
♥ K2	5H(1)	5S(2)	all pass	
♦ K10842				
♣ 842				

- 1) Sid gives them a push
- 2) North accepts and the die is cast

Sid leads the ♥K and dummy comes down with the following hand

### North

♠ AK103  
♥ 95  
♦ A97  
♣ AJ53

### Sid Ismail

♠ 962  
♥ K2  
♦ K10842  
♣ 842

Partner overtakes this with the ♥A and continues with the ♥Q which is ruffed by declarer with the ♠Q. Declarer now draws 3 rounds of trumps starting with the two top spades in dummy and returning to hand with the ♠J. East follows to the first round then discards hearts on the subsequent rounds. Declarer now tries the ♦Q, covered by the king and won in dummy with the ace. Now declarer plays a small diamond back to the jack, then exits

with a third diamond won by Sid. East has followed with 2 small diamonds then discarded another heart on the third round.

Plan your play.

### Initial Analysis

We all know the old adage that we should never give declarer a ruff and discard, but for every rule there is an exception, and here it is. Sid has been counting declarer's hand. She is known to have started with exactly 5 spades, 1 heart and 3 diamonds, and thus by deduction she also started with exactly 4 clubs. As the clubs are breaking 3-2 the defence loses nothing by offering declarer a ruff and discard at this stage of the game. The fourth club is always going to be a winner and a club switch now might prove to be a losing play if partner holds the queen.

Declarer was clearly disappointed with Sid's chosen line of defence but she had been counting too. She knew that Sid had started with 3 spades, 2 hearts and 5 diamonds, thus she deduced he also started with 3 clubs. As there was a 60% chance he held the queen, she finessed him for it and so went down.

### Final Analysis

“I see what you mean”, I replied. Here is the full deal

#### North

♠ AK103  
♥ 95  
♦ A97  
♣ AJ53

#### Sid Ismail

♠ 962  
♥ K2  
♦ K10842  
♣ 842

#### Me

♠ 2  
♥ AQJ8763  
♦ 65  
♣ Q7

#### South

♠ QJ874  
♥ 4  
♦ QJ3  
♣ K1096

Thanks to Sid's aggressive bidding and his thoughtful defence, this hand proves to be a top for us despite declarer's best efforts in the play. But my sympathies lie with North. What would you have bid with his hand? A double would have earned him a top but as he chose to press on perhaps one can argue that justice was done.