

November 2017

I was watching a top flight match on BBO when this hand came up. This is a tough hand; it's one of those hands that has so many ifs and buts about it that many of us just give up working out the possibilities and go into automatic mode hoping for the best. The declarer did just this, and finished one down.

Bidding

Dealer South
None vul.

South	W	N	E	S
♠ A854				1C
♥ Q103	1D	dbl	pass	1S
♦ KQ	pass	4S	all pass	
♣ K652				

The bidding has been straightforward. East leads the ♦A and a rather disappointing dummy comes down

North

♠ KJ92
♥ AK75
♦ 872
♣ J8

South

♠ A854
♥ Q103
♦ KQ
♣ K652

West continues with a small Diamond, East following with the 3 and 6 indicating a 3 card suit.

Plan your play.

Initial Analysis

We already know quite a bit about this hand; the opponents have 14 high card points between them and West started with 5 Diamonds to the ace so that accounts for 4 points. If Spades break 4-1 you are going down. If East has the ♠Q you are almost certainly going down as you now need him to hold the ♣A and also hope that something good

happens in Hearts. So the bottom line is that the Spades need to break and West must hold the queen. Hold that thought, now plan your play.

If this is as far as your thinking has got you, then you are doing pretty well and certainly no worse than the declarer in question. You can draw trumps finessing West for the queen, play a Club up to the king and if that doesn't work you still have the Heart suit to fall back on.

But perhaps you can come up with a better plan? How about playing West for the ♣Q? This line works even in the unlikely event that East started with the ace. But you are going to have to play the Club to your jack now while you still have enough entries to take the trump finesse, establish the ♣K and get back to dummy to enjoy it. So you play a small Club to the jack but bad luck, it loses to the queen. East now plays the ♦J, well of course he has this card for who in his right mind would lead the ace from AJ?

Plan your play.

Is it time now to give up? We can still draw trumps and hope something good will happen in the Heart suit. We know more about this hand now. East started with at least 3 points so we are practically certain the ♣A is with West which is what we suspected right from the beginning. But we have thought of a better plan. There is a slim chance that West holds the ace doubleton, so we ruff the Diamond and play another small Club towards dummy; even if the ace does not appear whoever wins this trick might now slip up in the defence. East wins this trick with the ♣10 and exits with a third Club giving us another chance to drop the ace. But no such luck. We ruff and draw 3 rounds of trumps and as we had hoped right from the beginning West turns up with the doubleton queen, discarding a Diamond on the third round. We have finally reached this position with the lead in dummy.

North

♠ -
♥ AK75
♦ -
♣ -

South

♠ -
♥ Q103
♦
♣ K

Plan your play

Final Analysis

- 1) If you played 3 rounds of Hearts hoping that the last Heart will make a trick then you score 1/10, and I am only giving you 1 because at least you realize that if the suit breaks 3-3 this is a winning line.
- 2) If you hold your breath and play East for the ♥J because you have counted the hand and realize East has started with 3 Spades, 3 Diamonds and 3 Clubs and thus must have started with 4 Hearts you get 8/10
- 3) If you took the Heart finesse knowing full well that East started with 4 to the jack because not only have you counted his hand but noted at the beginning of this article the actual declarer went down hoping something good would happen in the Heart suit then you score 10/10 – now that's what I call real table presence!