

December 2017

Here is a hand hot off the press. In fact it was played last Sunday in Pretoria in a Pairs competition.

Bidding

Board 23

Dealer South

All vul

South	W	N	E	S
♠ K932				pass
♥ 1095	1NT(1)2C(2)		pass	3S
♦ K107	pass	4S		all pass
♣ AJ6				

The bidding has been straightforward.

- 1) 15-17 points, balanced
- 2) Hamilton, at least 4-4 in the majors

West leads the ♣7 and the following dummy comes down

North

♠ Q1085
♥ AK763
♦ 4
♣ K54

South

♠ K932
♥ 1095
♦ K107
♣ AJ6

East inserts the ♣9 and you win the first trick with the jack.

Your partner clearly has every confidence in your ability to play hands well.

Plan your play.

Initial Analysis

There are only 17 high points missing and West could well have all of them. If this is the case then barring accidents 10 tricks should be a breeze. You try a small spade towards

dummy inserting the ♠8 when West follows low. To your horror this loses to the ♠J, what are the chances? East returns the ♣3, ♣6, ♣8 and won in dummy with the ♣K. You now play the ♠Q from dummy, East follows and West wins with the ace. He returns the ♣10 and to your relief East follows with the ♣2.

Plan your play.

Things have taken a turn for the worse. With two spade losers and a certain diamond loser we will have to play the hearts for no losers.

- 1) East might have the singleton J
- 2) West might hold the queen and jack of hearts doubleton
- 3) East might hold the singleton ♥8
- 4) East might hold the doubleton ♥8

In the first case you can certainly play the hearts for no losers but you can't make the contract. If you cash the ♥A dropping the jack you can return to your hand with a spade to take the heart finesse, but West will simply cover your heart with the queen effectively blocking the suit and you will lose two more tricks. So let's eliminate option 1. Option 3 requires you to play a top heart now from your hand so you try the ♥10, ♥J won by the king in dummy East dropping the ♥4. When you return to your hand with a spade West throws a small diamond away

Plan your play.

Now we are down to options 2 and 4, but as West has turned up with a doubleton spade the odds against him holding only two hearts and still finding a 1NT opening are very slim so you play the ♥9, Q♥, A♥ and East drops the ♥8. Well done, making 10 tricks! Here is the full hand

North

♠ Q1085
♥ AK763
♦ 4
♣ K54

West

♠ A7
♥ QJ2
♦ AQJ6
♣ Q1087

East

♠ J64
♥ 84
♦ 98532
♣ 932

South

♠ K932
♥ 1095
♦ K107
♣ AJ6

Final Analysis

I think you will agree that this line of play required a high level of skill and imagination so you will be pleased to know that the player in question was my partner Noah Apteker who is only 16 years old. Now if we can just find 3 more players in South Africa of his age and aptitude I predict that in the years to come we will have the best bridge team in the world!