

March 2018

I've always thought good bridge players would make good detectives. Is the corollary true – that good detectives would make good bridge players? I think so. Try out your deductive powers on the following hand from a recent teams match.

Bidding

Dealer West
None vul

South	W	N	E	S
♠ A54	1S	dbl	pass	4H
♥ KJ753	all pass			
♦ J92				
♣ K7				

West leads the ♠Q and a partner tables a rather disappointing dummy. Kids, don't try North's bid at home.

North

♠ K98
♥ 942
♦ AQ64
♣ A83

Prospects don't look good but it's early days yet. You win this trick in dummy with the King East following low, and try a small heart to your Jack, West winning with the Ace. West continues with the ♠J on which East discards a club and you win this trick in hand with the Ace. You now cash the ♥K West dropping the ♥8 and East the ♥Q.

Plan your play.

Initial Analysis

East is fooling no one with that ♥Q, with a doubleton he would have ruffed the spade continuation so he is marked with the ♥10. So now we know more about this hand; West started with 6 spades headed by the Queen, Jack and 10 and a doubleton heart headed by the Ace. Where are the rest of his points to justify an opening bid? He must surely hold the ♦K but knowing our luck he might possibly only hold the Queen and Jack of clubs.

If the diamonds break 3-3 we can make this contract now by establishing the 4th diamond and discarding our losing spade. For this to happen we need to keep West off lead. If West started with the ♦K and East the ♦10 we can do this simply by running our ♦9 towards dummy letting East win then later finessing West for the ♦K. This line won't work however in the unlikely event that the King and 10 are with East, where simply running the ♦J would have worked. On the other hand if West started with only 2 diamonds to the King we can play the diamond suit for no losers simply by finessing the ♦Q and cashing the ♦A dropping the King. Running the ♦9 works in both these scenarios but we don't have to make this play right away when playing detective is more fun. Play 3 rounds of clubs ruffing the third round. When West follows he is marked with at most a doubleton diamond. Now the finesse followed by the Ace brings home the contract.

The full hand

North		
♠ K98		
♥ 942		
♦ AQ64		
♣ A83		
West		East
♠ QJ10763		♠ 2
♥ A8		♥ Q106
♦ K8		♦ 10753
♣ Q109		♣ J6542
South		
♠ A54		
♥ KJ753		
♦ J92		
♣ K7		

Final Analysis

Sifting through the clues and drawing the right conclusions is one of the joys of playing bridge. Perhaps we should start a club at our local Police station.

