

June 2018

The very next hand I watch the Poles playing (see May issue) demonstrates an important lesson

Bidding

Dealer North
N-S vul

South	W	N	E	S
♠ KJ2		1C	pass	1H
♥ 109842	1S	dbl	pass	2H
♦ A94	pass	4H	all pass	
♣ 94				

A responsive double by North promising 3 hearts was followed by an aggressive raise to game when partner signs off

West leads the ♠5 (2nd and 4th leads) and dummy goes down with

North

♠ A7
♥ Q65
♦ 52
♣ AKQJ106

South

♠ KJ2
♥ 109842
♦ A94
♣ 94

3NT is cold and on this lead you would have made 10 tricks but unfortunately you have reached the inferior contract of 4H

Plan your play.

Initial Analysis

You start by counting your tricks; 3 spades, at least 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 6 clubs add up to 12 tricks. But wait a minute – we’re missing the top 2 hearts but as long as West holds the jack we will still make 11 tricks. And therein lies the danger of this hand, because if you start by playing the ♥10 towards dummy intending to finesse, should East win this trick he will certainly switch to a diamond and now you are in trouble. If you play another trump the defence will win this trick too, cash a winning diamond and play a third round forcing you to ruff with the queen. If the ♥J hasn’t yet appeared then it just got promoted and you are going 1 down. You can try instead at this stage cashing the ♠A, returning to hand with a club and then discarding dummy’s losing diamond on the ♠K. Now when you play another heart, if the defence is able to cash the top 2 hearts you will go 2 off, but if the hearts are blocked you can hope that you will have time to ruff a diamond and discard the third one on a club. But you are not in control of things so the operative word here is “hope”.

So back to the drawing board.

Don’t draw trumps straight away. Rather cash the ♠A, get back to hand with the ♦A, discard a diamond on the ♠K then ruff a diamond. Back to hand with a club, ruff the last diamond in dummy then exit with a heart.

With the first line it was easy to go down, with the second it should prove easy (but not guaranteed) to make as we have now reduced the defence to only making tricks with their trumps.

The full hand

North

♠ A7
♥ Q65
♦ 52
♣ AKQJ106

West

♠ Q10653
♥ AK7
♦ K83
♣ 83

East

♠ 984
♥ J3
♦ QJ1076
♣ 752

South

♠ KJ2
♥ 109842
♦ A94
♣ 94

Final Analysis

The lesson here is that sometimes it is better to count your losers rather than your winners as that might suggest a superior line of play. As for the Poles? All I can say was it was another polished performance.