

## August 2018

This fascinating hand presented itself at the recent GBU Teams tournament

You arrive in 7NT as South and receive the lead of the ♣4.

### North

♠ K983  
♥ K5432  
♦ -  
♣ AKQ6

### South

♠ AQ5  
♥ AJ  
♦ AKQJ9  
♣ 1082

Plan your play.

### Initial Analysis

You have 12 top tricks. If the spades break you have 13 tricks, if the heart finesse works you have 13 tricks, if the ♦10 drops you have 13 tricks and if the clubs break, or the Jack drops doubleton or if West has led away from the Jack and you play small from dummy, you have 13 tricks. I can't recall ever seeing a hand where every suit presented an opportunity of making one additional trick, far less one where the additional trick means you will make your grand! It reminds me of my childhood when at Christmas I didn't know which present to open first.

Did you decide on gambling all at the first trick and letting the club run around to your 10? I bet you didn't. As I have observed before practically no one wants to go off in a slam at trick 1. So you win the first trick in dummy with the Ace – what card do you play next?

Now, for those of you who got the answer to this question wrong, let me explain why I feel this is definitely the right thing to do. You must cash your ♣K next. The advantage of this play is that if the Jack now falls you are home and dry. But on this hand something almost as good happened, East discarded a small heart.

Plan your play.

Now I should explain that the bidding (at our table anyway) indicted that you were short in hearts though you clearly hold the Ace. The fact that East is short in clubs suggests he might hold more hearts than his partner and that he has parted with one of them might strengthen that impression. If this is the case then statistically there is more of a chance that he holds the Queen. So should you screw up your courage and take the heart finesse? Or perhaps try out the spades first then take the heart finesse? I must be honest, I did not find anyone who actually made 13 tricks on this hand and certainly those who bid the grand went off in the contract and I strongly suspect that they went wrong at this stage of the play.

I believe the correct line of play is to cash the ♥A just in case the Queen is singleton, then play the Jack to the King. If everyone follows we know a lot more about this hand and how to proceed. But again we have a bonus as West discards a club on the second heart.

Plan your play.

Well at this stage the play simplifies itself. West started with 7 cards in spades and diamonds. Return to your hand with a spade and start cashing the diamonds throwing hearts from dummy. If West shows out by the time the fourth diamond is played then he is guarding the black suits and he has just been squeezed. If West is still following suit on the 4<sup>th</sup> diamond then either that suit breaks, or West started with at least 5 diamonds. Throw a spade from dummy then cash the top spades ending in your hand. West is now squeezed in the minor suits.

The full hand

| <b>North</b>                        |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|                                     | ♠ K983<br>♥ K5432<br>♦ -<br>♣ AKQ6 |
| <b>West</b>                         | <b>East</b>                        |
| ♠ J6<br>♥ 10<br>♦ 108732<br>♣ J9543 | ♠ 10742<br>♥ Q9876<br>♦ 654<br>♣ 7 |
| <b>South</b>                        |                                    |
|                                     | ♠ AQ5<br>♥ AJ<br>♦ AKQJ9<br>♣ 1082 |

**Final Analysis**

If you let the first trick run to the 10 or if you took the heart finesse well done, I see you like living dangerously. But for those who found the squeeze – chapeau!