

♠♥ **So, how many tricks did you make on board #8?** ♦♣

Last Thursday (3rd November, 2016) Board 12 offered an opportunity for declarers to shine.

Hand interface showing cards and a trick-taking grid. The grid shows a sequence of tricks: 13, 10, 9, 8.

The hand was played at thirteen tables. At two tables East/West were allowed to play in 5♣. At one of those tables the contract was doubled and made with an overtrick whereas at the other table the contract was made.

At two other tables East/West played the hand in 4♠X, one declarer scoring eight tricks and the other made nine tricks.

At the remaining nine tables the contract was played in hearts... five times at the five level and four times at the four level.

Board No 12 N/S Vul Dealer West								
NS	EW	Bid	By	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	22	4♥	N	12	680		23	1
2	24	4♥	N	9		100	9	15
3	26	5♥*	N	10		200	4	20
4	15	4♥	N	10	620		18	6
5	17	4♥	N	9		100	9	15
6	19	5♥	N	10		100	9	15
7	21	4♠*	W	8	300		16	8
8	23	5♥	N	10		100	9	15
9	25	4♠*	W	9	100		14	10
10	14	5♠*	E	12		650		24
11	16	5♣	W	11		400	2	22
12	18	5♥	N	12	680		23	1
13	20	5♥	N	11	650		20	4

The hand records suggest (and it is always right even though it is often a double-dummy solution that is required to match the actual result!) that eleven tricks should be made yet five declarers made less than ten tricks! Let's have a closer look.

In all cases North was declarer. East invariably kicked off with a top club and then probably took stock of the situation after dummy was placed on the table.

But this is NOT a hand with a problem for the defense. It is a hand which declarer needs to navigate to make eleven tricks, or as happened at two tables, twelve tricks. Or ten

tricks as an absolute minimum.

So, how should declarer proceed. Well, obviously the next move is up to East but in reality it doesn't matter what East does next other than switch to a spade which will hold declarer to eleven tricks. And if East/West don't cash their spade winner at trick two then they shouldn't get it!

If the defense continues with a club at trick two, declarer will ruff in dummy and then proceed to establish the diamond suit with safety utmost in his mind. Declarer should play a diamond to his Ace and then play a heart to dummy noting East's trump void. Next declarer will ruff a small diamond in hand, over-ruffing West if necessary who will at this stage have been shown to be the holder of all three outstanding hearts and East will have been identified as the possessor of an original holding of four diamonds, two of which have now been played.

Declarer should now play a second round of trumps to dummy's ♥J (or ♥K) and then play another diamond from dummy (note that the ♦K has NOT yet been played) which is again safely ruffed in hand. Declarer now plays a third trump to dummy which ensures that West has no trumps left.

Declarer now cashes the ♦K and the remaining three diamonds, which are all winners, and discards the four spades from his hand.

Declarer then simply ruffs dummy's spade in his hand and if the defense did not cash their spade winner at trick two they don't get it and declarer makes twelve tricks. If the spade trick was cashed at trick two, then declarer will only make eleven tricks.

This type of play is called a **Dummy Reversal** and simply requires that declarer views the dummy as the declaring hand and his own hand as dummy. Sometimes it can be difficult to recognise this opportunity and some declarers may fail to take advantage of the layout at the table.

It should be noted that barring a 5-0 diamond break it is absolutely safe to play the hand in the fashion outlined above. Note that declarer only needs to ruff two diamonds in his hand and if West follows to the second diamond then declarer should ruff the trick with the ♥A or ♥Q which cannot be over-ruffed by East if for example the heart and diamond holdings of the East/West hands were reversed.

If diamonds break 3-2 OR hearts breaks 2-1 there is absolutely no problem for declarer. The only slight hiccup that might arise would occur if East has the three trumps and a singleton diamond. In that instance, after ruffing the second diamond with ♥A (or ♥Q) and discovering that the diamonds are 4-1 declarer can afford to play three top hearts, ending in dummy and then safely ruff another diamond in hand with a small trump. Declarer can then access dummy by ruffing his second club and then proceed as before by cashing the ♦K and the three remaining diamond winners. But if dummy has been forced with a club ruff at trick two or three then this line would not work.

Note that if dummy is forced to ruff a club or spade BEFORE the diamonds are set-up then declarer should proceed as outlined above. BUT if the diamond and heart distributions were reversed then to succeed declarer, after ruffing the second round of diamonds in hand with ♥A or ♥Q, would have to lead ♥9 and let it run unless East covered with the ♥10. Declarer could then ruff another diamond in hand with the ♥A and duly finesse the ♥K7 against East's ♥85! X-ray vision required and of course that is a double-dummy solution which would fail if West had the singleton or doubleton ♥10!

But on the hand as it was at the table... eleven tricks are cold.

And off course ten tricks should also be no problem and indeed 4♥ can be made by playing the hand so that declarer ruffs a club in dummy, unblocks the ♦A, draws trumps ENDING in dummy, cashes ♦K and discards a spade from hand and then leads a spade towards his ♠QJ10. Declarer will lose two spades together with ♣A...but ten tricks should be safely in the bag!

It is likely that some declarers either tried to cash the ♦K BEFORE trumps were drawn and West unhelpfully ruffed it. Yes, you could over-ruff but you duly lost a winner (♦K) in the process. It is also possible that some declarers drew trumps before setting up the diamonds a la 'dummy reversal' or drew trumps before negotiating a club ruff in dummy. Also, some may have been taken aback when the outstanding diamonds did not break favourably!

But notice how the dummy-reversal line accounted for the 4-1 diamond split. And of course being careful not to try and cash the ♦K before all trumps were drawn!

I learned bridge from my parents when I was a teenager, together with my two brothers, and I have never forgotten an observation that my father once made... *'if one player has a singleton it is very likely that there is at least one other singleton in another player's hand on the same board'*.

On this hand you will note that there were three singletons...and the fourth hand had a void! Thanks for the good tip, Dad!

**Paul J Scannell,
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