

A bit of luck always helps in bridge. A fortunate lie of the cards, an advantageous lead or some poor defending can allow you to make a pretty hopeless looking contract. On the deal below, the same contract produced a different result at three tables. It just depended on the calibre of player who was sitting in the East chair. Take over the East hand and see at which of the three tables you might have been sitting :

	Q62
	Q105
	KQJ10
	972
1074	AKJ83
72	84
95432	A8
K64	Q1083
	95
	AKJ963
	76
	AJ5

East opened the bidding with One Spade and South overcalled Two Hearts. North felt his hand was just a bit too good to Pass so he raised to Three Hearts. South decided his hand was a bit better than it might be for a simple overcall of Two Hearts so he accepted North's invitation and raised to Four Hearts, the final contract. Perhaps North and/or South might have been a bit more cautious on account of their balanced hands but, although neither was guilty of anything too serious, the final contract was a poor one.

At the first table declarer got lucky. West led a spade and East was delighted to see Qxx in the dummy. East won the first trick with the Jack of spades and the second trick with the Ace. Without pause for thought, East banged down the King of spades at trick 3 and that was the end of the defence. Declarer ruffed, drew trumps in two rounds and led a diamond. East won his Ace but declarer claimed the rest of the tricks, his two losing clubs disappearing on dummy's diamond winners. +420 gave N/S a top score.

This was poor defence by East. Drooling at the prospect of being able to cash three quick winners in spades, he forgot to take notice of the cards his partner had played to the first two tricks. West had led the four of spades and followed with the seven at trick two ... *therefore he had to hold the ten of spades as well*. If West had held a doubleton 74 his opening lead would have been the seven, not the four.

At the second table, East did notice that his partner had led the four of spades and followed with the seven at trick 2. East knew for sure that his partner held the last spade so there was no point in trying to cash a third spade winner. With dummy's diamond suit all set to provide declarer with discards as soon as the Ace was knocked out, East looked to the club suit for the fourth defensive trick and switched to a low club. Declarer played low, West won with the King and returned a second club, East's Queen losing to the Ace. Declarer had to lose a fourth trick to the Ace of diamonds and finished one down. +50 gave EW a good score, but not quite a top score.

Declarer at table three was unlucky to be facing an E/W pair who knew their stuff. East won the first two tricks as before but found an even stronger defence when he switched to the *ten of clubs* at trick 3 (see 'surrounding play', September 2012 web page). Declarer played the

Jack but West won with the King and returned a second club. Whichever club declarer played from dummy, E/W had to score a second club trick to go with the Ace of diamonds and declarer finished two down. +100 gave E/W a complete and well deserved top.

At one time or another we have all defended as East did at the first table, gleefully thumping winners down without paying attention to partner's cards. If that behaviour strikes a chord with you, take a look at this excellent article by one of the all-time bridge greats, Mike Lawrence : http://www.michaelslawrence.com/Articles/040_frm.html

Enjoy your bridge !