

2017 Hutton Christmas Puzzle

Avoid the Danger Hand

Question

The 2017 puzzle was based on a basic card play technique employed by many experts.

Against your 4 Spade contract West leads the King of hearts. What is your best line of play to make ten tricks?

North

♠ QJ4
♥ A5
♦ AK654
♣ 852

West

♠ 75
♥ KQT43
♦ T8
♣ AT97

East

♠ 63
♥ J9872
♦ QJ9
♣ QJ3

South

♠ AKT982
♥ 6
♦ 732
♣ K64

ANSWER

To spot the correct line of play, first recognise the 'Danger' hand. Then to make your contract you also need to develop tricks in Diamonds, but you cannot let East gain the lead because of the danger of a club switch. East is the 'Danger hand'.

All would be well if East has the ♣ A or if West started with three diamonds, but why take a chance.

Simply play low on West's lead at trick one. West will probably continue with a heart and you can win the ace and throw a diamond from hand.

Now draw trumps and cash top diamonds. When the suit breaks 3-2 you can ruff, establishing two diamond winners in dummy with an entry in trumps.

Should trumps be divided 3-1, you are still home if the player with three trumps has at least two diamonds. You cash dummy's diamond honour's, ruff a diamond high and return to dummy pulling the last trump in the process and cash your good diamond tricks.