

# Board of the Week 37

By Dick Chapman

Well, it's been a while since I have been able to write up a board. Here's one to test your defensive skills. I played this on BBO.

	♠K42 ♥Q986 ♦J74 ♣J82		
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	V: B D: S	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	
	♠J9753 ♥A2 ♦AKQ ♣KQ10		
South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	2♠	Pass
4♠ (!)	All pass		

First, I readily admit that 4 spades was a slight overbid. With a balanced 19 and a very bad spade suit, 3 spades might have been enough. But here I am in game.

It didn't matter this time, but I got an unguarded club ace for the opening lead. I fear ruffs so I play the king at trick 1. Here comes the second club and I win the queen. I lose the trump king to East's ace and get a third club. Lo, my jack wins! West had led from a three or four card club suit. I'm hoping four, as you will soon see.

At trick 5 I lead a spade from dummy and my jack holds. This is the position at trick 6:

	♠4 ♥Q986 ♦J74 ♣		
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	V: B D: S	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	
	♠975 ♥A2 ♦AKQ ♣		

The trump queen is still outstanding, almost assuredly in East. Next I win three straight diamond tricks and I'm still alive. There will be no sluff-ruff because I'm going to throw East in with a spade and dummy will be out of trump at that point. My only hope is that East started with 3=4=3=3 distribution and holds the heart king.

So, I lead a third spade and, as expected, East wins. East leads a heart and I duck to the queen, contract made. The full hand is shown on the next column:

	♠K42 ♥Q986 ♦J74 ♣J82	
♠106 ♥J54 ♦9532 ♣A976	V: B D: S	♠AQ8 ♥K1073 ♦1086 ♣543
	♠J9753 ♥A2 ♦AKQ ♣KQ10	

After the third spade at trick 9, East was down to ♥K1073. As stated, my only chance was for East to be end played and hold the heart king. I burned up a week's luck on this one board.

But I still should be down one. Study the hand again from the East perspective:

	♠K42 ♥Q986 ♦J74 ♣J82	
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	V: B D: S	♠AQ8 ♥K1073 ♦1086 ♣543
	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	

You win the first spade and are disappointed partner doesn't get a club ruff. You have the club ace and two spades, so where is the fourth trick going to come from? The answer is diamonds or hearts, right? Well, any diamond trick you have is never going to disappear. Either you have a trick there or you don't. But do you smell an end play coming?

Now that I have outlined the issue, what is your defense? Think a moment then make a decision. The answer is on the next page.

The solution is quite simple IF you can see the end play coming. Just win the second spade and lead another spade (a diamond would also work). Declarer will win and now the dead hand is dummy's, not yours. Look at the position at the critical moment, trick 5:

	♠42 ♥Q986 ♦J74 ♣	
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	V: B D: S	♠Q8 ♥K1073 ♦1086 ♣
	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	

The 2 of spades is the lead. Win the queen (your third trick) and get off lead with the spade 8. Now declarer will either have to lose a diamond or start the hearts or the contract was always going to make \*. If you win the third spade, as was the case at the table, you have to start the hearts and the contract makes.

Betsy Berry used to preach this concept to us newer players: on defense, try to not start new suits.\*\* Here, East started the heart suit.

In the BBO field, making was 8.53 imps and going down 1 would have been -3.00 imps. So it cost defenders almost 12 imps when East didn't break up the end play by winning the second spade and escaping with the third.

By the way, a heart lead from West at trick 1 would have been the end of me in any case. I will lose a club, two spades, and a heart. I'm not saying it was right to lead a heart: I might lead a passive diamond after the stated auction. A diamond would put the burden back on East to avoid the end play.

\* By "always going to make" I mean the declarer might hold a stiff ace of hearts and either AKQx of diamonds or AKQ of diamonds and the 13th club.

\*\* David Cockcroft told me Betsy was taught that lesson by Curtis Finch. Senior, I mean, the namesake of our beautiful facility. I never met the man but wish I had. I did know Betsy, of course, as a mentor, opponent, partner, and friend.