

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

Last Thursday (27th October, 2016) Board 8 offered an opportunity for declarers to shine.

Dir: West
Vul: None

♠ 10 6
♥ Q 10 4 3
♦ Q 9 8 7 3
♣ 9 2

Optimum
EW 990

♠ K Q 8 7 4 2
♥ A J
♦ A J 10
♣ K Q

NORTH
WEST 8 EAST
SOUTH

♠ 5 3
♥ K 5 2
♦ K 5 4 2
♣ A J 8 3

4
20 11
5

♠ A J 9
♥ 9 8 7 6
♦ 6
♣ 10 7 6 5 4

N
- - - -
S
E 3 4 3 6 6
W 4 4 3 6 6

View Larger Play it again

The hand was played at 12 tables. At six tables the contract was played below slam level...in the NT game at 4 tables and twice in the spade game. At the other six tables slam was reached... once in a contract of six spades and five times in the small NT slam.

Only five pairs made twelve tricks. And 50% of those who bid the slam failed to make it.

Irrespective of the denomination (spades or NT) twelve tricks should be made if care is exercised.

Looking at the results it seems as if the various contracts were declared from both side of the table... five times by East and seven times by West.

Board No 8 None Vul Dealer West								
NS	EW	Bid	By	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
1	22	3NT	W	11		460	11	11
2	24	3NT	W	12		490	7	15
3	14	6♣	W	11	50		19	3
4	16	6NT	E	12		990	2	20
5	18	6NT	W	12		990	2	20
6	20	4♣	W	11		450	15	7
7	23	3NT	W	12		490	7	15
8	13	6NT	E	12		990	2	20
9	15	6NT	E	11	50		19	3
10	17	6NT	E	10	100		22	
11	19	4NT	W	11		460	11	11
12	21	4♣	E	11		450	15	7

As soon as the lead is made and dummy is tabled declarer should review his own hand and dummy and attempt to count tricks...top and potential.

The first thing that should be obvious is that the spade suit has to produce more than one trick!

Once that is accepted it then means that declarer has to assume the following:

That the ♠A is with South and that the suit breaks no worse than 3-2.

In order to take advantage of this declarer should appreciate that the spade suit must be played from the East hand TWICE unless a very friendly South rises with the ♠A on the first round.

So now it's time to think through the sequence of plays that will enable us to play the spade suit twice from the East hand.

How many entries to the East hand does declarer need? Just two! How many entries are there? There are three entries to the East hand.... ♥K, ♣A, ♦K

BEWARE GREEKS BEARING GIFTS!!!

It is easy to get distracted when your opponents appear to offer a free finesse. Just check and see are they Greeks?

In the instance of this hand Greeks might come bearing gifts when West is declarer through the lead of a heart from North. The natural inclination is to let the lead round to declarer's hand and to win the soft trick with the ♥J. And if declarer accepts the gift he loses one of his entries to the East hand...the ♥K can no longer be accessed as an entry because declarer is now looking at a stiff ♥A opposite ♥K5.... Ouch!

Declarer should have ignored the Greek's gift and risen with ♥K on the first round. Declarer should then make the first lead of a spade. South should duck and declarer should win with the ♠K. Declarer now returns to dummy by overtaking the ♣K (or ♣Q) with dummy's ♣A. and declarer then leads a second spade from dummy.

South's goose is now cooked. If he ducks, then declarer wins the trick and clears the suit by playing a third round.

Declarer's possible losing diamond can now be discarded on dummy's third club.

Whatever South does next, declarer should be able to untangle all the remaining tricks, discarding a potential losing diamond from hand on dummy's third club if need be.

Similarly on a diamond lead from North, declarer should win the trick with dummy's ♦K and play the first round of spades and the play of the hand unfolds the same way as before.

If East is declarer then he should win the first trick in his hand and lead a spade towards dummy's KQxxxx. If South ducks then declarer should return to hand via one of the other two entries and repeat the spade play.

Where declarer is likely to go wrong is in accepting gifts from the Greeks, particularly when North leads a diamond or a heart. BE VIGILANT re entries to the East hand. And in a spade contract, if declarer tries to play three rounds of clubs to discard a diamond from the West hand disaster strikes as North ruffs the third round. Ouch!

And in a spade contract declarer has to be even more vigilant on the lead of a diamond. If declarer accepts the Greek gift and lets the diamond run around to the West hand he now runs the risk of a diamond ruff if he tries to gain access to the East hand via a second round of diamonds... Ouch!

So, as with any contract...focus on the overall objective and don't be diverted by the offer of cheap tricks which might prove fatal to achieving the real target!

It has been said so many times before but it is still worth saying once more...do your thinking when dummy hits the table and BEFORE you play from dummy.

**Paul J Scannell,
October 27th, 2016**