

9.7.19 Hand 4

When your glass is a quarter empty, try to fill the missing 25%

There were a number of hands which needed subtle handling on Tuesday – subtlety not being the strength of many players.

Here's one where the best play will land the contract.

East opens 3S and South is looking at:

♠ A J 3
♥ A Q J 9 5 4
♦ 8
♣ Q J 10

This is good value for 4H, which was bid and passed out. West leads the Q♠ and North goes down:

♠ 6
♥ 7 6 2
♦ Q 6 5 2
♣ A 9 8 6 4

And South again:

♠ A J 3
♥ A Q J 9 5 4
♦ 8
♣ Q J 10

The contract looks good if either the K♥ or K♣ are onside. If, for instance, K♣ is right, there should only be one Heart and one Diamond loser, and a likely Spade loser. One Spade in hand can be ruffed in the Dummy but by the time the trumps are out, there will still be another Spade loser in hand. Still, only 3 losers if either K♥ or K♣ is right, so what can be done if they're both wrong? (25% chance, all things, as they say, being equal)

South's best bet is to take the opening lead in hand and set up the Clubs immediately. If he doesn't, say instead taking a Spade ruff in dummy, and then the Heart finesse, he has no chance if this fails and the Club finesse is wrong. Having won K♥, West will remove dummy's last trump (assuming the K♥ isn't bare) and when East comes in with K♣, he will cash a Spade, giving the defence their third trick and then a Diamond switch will produce their fourth.

So, trying to run the Q♣, South sees East take the K♣. East cannot continue a Spade as he has K♠ and Dummy is out of them. Note that the Heart finesse now seems unlikely to work. East has turned up with K♠ and K♣ and is likely to hold either A♦ or K♦ (if West had both of them, he would probably have cashed one before switching to a Spade). With the K♥ also, East would be way too strong for a pre-empt. Maybe East returns a second Club.

South should take this in hand and lay down the A♥. If he drops the K♥, he can smile (but not too smugly). Assuming the K♥ doesn't fall, best is to continue J♥. West has to be alert and go up with K♥ if he has three Hearts. If he lets J♥ go, thinking maybe his partner has Q♥, the contract is brought in. South cashes J♣ and overtakes 10♣ with A♣. Assuming West doesn't ruff, South dumps a Diamond on the fourth Club. If West does ruff in, South still has a trump in Dummy to take care of

the second Spade and now he has Clubs set up for discards. West can go up with K♥ on the second Heart but there's nothing he can lead after that to beat the contract. There is still a trump in Dummy to stop the defence cashing a Spade and South just needs to come to hand with J♣, draw the last trump and enjoy the long Clubs on the table (A♣ being an entry).

In fact, the play went somewhat differently and it was East who fell asleep. He got on lead with K♣, cashed the A♦ (third trick) but inexplicably failed to cash a Spade. Maybe thinking partner had led off ♠ Q x x (the Q♠ would be an incorrect lead from this), meaning South would now be out, East continued a Diamond and South was able to ruff, cash J♣ and overtake the 10♣ in dummy to get a Spade discard on the long Clubs.

I assume the bidding was the same for all pairs who got to 4H and it looks like the opening lead would have been the same. But no-one, other than the South who enjoyed a defensive error, made the 4H contract.

Full hand was board 10 (transposed for exposition):

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Dir: East
Vul: All

♠ K 10 9 7 5 4 2

♥ 10

♦ A 7 3

♣ K 7

NORTH

10

SOUTH

♠ A J 3

♥ A Q J 9 5 4

♦ 8

♣ Q J 10

♠ Q 8

♥ K 8 3

♦ K J 10 9 4

♣ 5 3 2

EAST

♠ 6

♥ 7 6 2

♦ Q 6 5 2

♣ A 9 8 6 4

15

10
9

6

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Note: true, if East (in the transposed hand) holds off K♣ and South now tries to run J♣, East can take K♣, switching to a low Diamond for his partner to lad a third Club which he ruffs. Your glass is definitely half-empty if you get defence like that.

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