



Bath Replays

3 Locked in dummy

Board 13. Somewhere in the past.

You would think, after playing Bridge for over 60 years (and still learning), that out of the thousand and one hands played, I would be able to recall playing some brilliant coup which resulted in a dramatic swing and won us the match. Sadly, such is not the case. The one hand that stands out in my memory is an utter disaster, which still haunts me to this day. I can remember every card in the hand and how it was played, so there is no need to check the archives for accuracy. (The board number I can't recall, but we were vulnerable, so I3 would seem appropriate enough.)

The two hands were as shown, with my partner sitting North. We were playing Benji with 5-card majors, so he opened I ♠.

I responded with a conservative INT to see what his next bid would be, as we had an agreement that there would be no need to repeat a major opening. Although he had six spades, they were so weak that he correctly responded 2NT and I bid the game. Opponents were silent throughout.

When the cards were tabled after the J ♦ lead, I could see that we were in the right contract and took stock, as one does, and counted my tricks. The fortunate lead had given me 5 possible tricks in diamonds, so with two clubs and two heart tricks (after knocking out A ♥) the contract was secure.

Added to this evaluation, there was another club trick on offer, and if the opposition opened up the spades themselves, a trick in this suit was also on the cards. One way or another, 10 tricks were available. A good score.

However, before complacency had set in fully, I looked at the J ♦ lead again. As dummy held the 10 & 9, there was no sort of sequence in the lead, so it looked like a singleton, which meant that only four diamond tricks were available. I thought it wise to test this out early. So, taking the J ♦ lead with the Ace, and without much further thought, I played a small diamond to the 10 in dummy. West followed (and the diamonds later turned out to be 3-3 after all). But the kind split was no longer much use to me, as I now realised that I had inadvertently locked myself in dummy.

Panic must have set in, as I then made the huge mistake of leading towards my J ♥ in the hope that the Ace was onside, but that hope was soon dashed, as the defence took this trick and set about the spades. When my Queen dropped under the King, the game was up, and they soon locked me back in dummy with a club lead. In the end play, I was forced to play the spades myself, and chose the 9 (whereas the Jack would have pinned the 10, leaving my 9 good). And to make matters still worse, I discarded a club from my hand, being loath to part with my 'winning' diamond tricks, which were by now utterly useless.

The phrase 'brain dead' springs to mind. I had managed to take all the wrong options in every suit to give the defence three spade tricks, two heart tricks and two club tricks, for minus 300, when 630 was there for the taking.

I'll always remember my partner's comment, which for him was quite conservative. As the dust settled, he very quietly said, "Well - that was quite simply - staggering." I had to agree.

And now that I have confessed my sins and cleansed my soul, perhaps my memory will let me forget one of my more miserable efforts. Somehow, I don't think it will.

Jim Corbett
6 April 2007

North
♠ J98743
♥ KQ7
♦ 109
♣ AK

South
♠ Q
♥ J83
♦ AKQ73
♣ J1043

Dealer
North.
All
vulnerable