

NORTH
WEST 15 EAST
Dealer

Bath Replays

18 Two bites at the cherry

Board 15. Wednesday 12 Sept, 2007.

This contribution features a board from a Wednesday evening. It differs from my previous efforts in that this time I managed to do something right, albeit with a little help from the opposition. How it was that I (South) rather than my partner ended up as declarer in 4♠, I'm afraid I can't remember. The auction could have been something like:

South	West	North	East
1♥	2♦	Double	3♦ (4♦, maybe?)
4♠	All pass		

But that could very well be wrong. For one thing, West led not a diamond, but the ♥3. So forgetting the auction for a moment, you might like to consider how you would use your combined 20 points to make 10 tricks in spades.

What all the books tell you is that *if there is only one distribution of the opponents' cards that will allow you to bring home the contract, then plan your play on the assumption that that is how the cards lie*. Here, it seemed to me, is a case in point. Only if the ♣A is right and the hearts are kindly split can I make 10 tricks: ♥A, ♣K and my eight trumps made separately on a cross-ruff.

So go for it. I take East's ♥Q with my Ace, go out to dummy with a heart ruff, take a deep breath and lead a small club. *Never believe what you read in books*. My ♣K is taken by West's Ace, which is followed by the ♣Q and a third club, ruffed by East.

Three tricks gone. Head bowed, I wait for the inevitable killing trump lead ... but it doesn't come. Instead, for whatever reason, East leads the ♥K, which I ruff in dummy. Phew! Time to regroup and study the wreckage.

Slowly, a possibility emerges. Once trumps are cleared, I have a club trick. And eventually a heart trick too, as only the ♥J remains (presumably with West, whose opening lead promised an honour). Add to that a heart ruff and four trump tricks and I'm home.

But there's a difficulty. I have to get back to my hand twice, either with two diamond ruffs or with one trump lead plus a diamond ruff. Either way it will only work if East started with three trumps and the remaining trumps are 2-2, so I can clear them in two rounds.

OK. We know what the books say: *if there is only one distribution of the opponents' cards ...* So let's take a second bite at the cherry. Lead the ♠J from dummy, overtaking with the Queen, ruff a heart with the ♠K and come back to hand with a diamond ruff. Then a second deep breath before leading the Ace of trumps ... and this time the fates are kind. West and East drop the ♠10 and the ♠9, and I'm left with three winners: a trump, a heart and a club.

So what can we take from this hand? One thing is that if Plan A fails, your opponents may offer you the chance of a Plan B. But the main thing I learned is to keep reading those books. They know what they're talking about.

Footnote A glance at the full deal reveals a second reason for doubting the auction above: West doesn't actually *have* a 2♦ overcall. All but one of the other spade contracts in the room had North as declarer. Very mysterious. Alternative suggestions for a likely auction on a postcard, please.

Chris Jones
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♠ KJ54
♥ 6
♦ K1032
♣ 10743

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♠ AQ86
♥ A10982
♦ -
♣ K865

♠ KJ
♥ -
♦ K1032
♣ 10

NORTH
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♠ AQ86
♥ 109
♦ -
♣ 8

♠ KJ54
♥ 6
♦ K1032
♣ 10743

♠ 107
♥ J543
♦ AJ95
♣ AQ9

NORTH
WEST 15 EAST
Dealer

♠ 932
♥ KQ7
♦ Q8764
♣ J2

♠ AQ86
♥ A10982
♦ -
♣ K865