

NORTH
WEST 14 Dealer
SOUTH

Bath Replays

31 Thinking it through

Board 14. Wednesday 7 Jan, 2009.

It's a bit galling to have to start the year by recording a failure, but I'm consoling myself that at least I went about things the right way. Just didn't make that final connection.

I'm sitting North. The auction starts with three passes, so I open 1♥, intending to rebid no trumps. East now comes in with 2♣, my partner (Paul Keightley) says 2♦, pass from West, and I bid 2NT. Paul raises to 3NT, which becomes the final contract:

West	North	East	South	
-	-	Pass	Pass	
Pass	1♥	2♣	2♦	
Pass	2NT	Pass	3NT	All pass

East leads ♣Q and dummy goes down. I'm mildly surprised that Paul has opted for NT instead of 4♥, but as he explained later, East's overcall after an opening pass looks like a 6-card suit, I'm likely to have at least 3 clubs for my NT bid, so West looks to have either a singleton or void in clubs - which means the defence will be ruffing in 4♥.

His reasoning, as usual, is spot on. I duck the first trick, and East continues with the ♣J, his partner discarding a small spade. The clubs were indeed 6-1. I decide I'd better take the trick this time, or East will drop my King and take the first 6 tricks.

Time to think. I have one trick, there are six more off the top, so I have to find two more in diamonds and/or spades. I realise, again to my surprise, that I know the whereabouts of all the significant high cards. In case you don't yet, pause for a moment and work it out.

If East has AQJxxx in clubs, he can't have ♠K or ♦K, or he surely would have opened the bidding. I'm placing both of those Kings with West. Let's test it out. Small heart over to the ♥Q (everybody following), a deep breath, then a small diamond towards my Queen. West plays low and ♦Q holds. I lead the ♦9 back, East covers with the 10, and I win with the Ace.

So far, so good. At this point I'm so pleased with myself that I decide to try the diamonds for 3-3 - if they are, I'm home. But of course they're not (they wouldn't be, would they, given East's fistful of clubs?), and moments later I'm cursing myself for not simply taking the trouble to think it through. West takes his two diamond tricks, gives me back a heart, and I'm stuck with eight tricks.

You saw it long ago, of course. What is West's holding? Say he started with 4 diamonds. We know he only had one club. Everyone followed to the first heart trick, so he can't have more than 4 hearts. And the rest must be spades. Which means the solution was staring me in the face.

All I have to do is play out all the hearts before leading the third round of diamonds. Then West can take his two diamond tricks and ... what then? He has no heart to lead, so all he can do is lead a spade. If he leads a low one, I let it run round to my Queen. And if he leads the King, I win with the Ace and my Queen is then good for the ninth trick.

Which is what all the books call an 'Elimination and End-play'. Eliminate his hearts, chuck him in with a diamond, and end-play him in Spades. Simple if you think of it in time.

Next time I will.

Chris Jones
January 2009

♠ A42
 ♥ AK75
 ♦ Q97
 ♣ K82

NORTH
WEST 14 Dealer
SOUTH

♠ A42
 ♥ AK75
 ♦ Q97
 ♣ K82

NORTH
WEST 14 Dealer
SOUTH

♠ Q9
 ♥ QJ64
 ♦ A543
 ♣ 1043

♠ A42
 ♥ AK75
 ♦ Q97
 ♣ K82
 ♠ KJ83
 ♥ 10982
 ♦ KJ82
 ♣ 7
 ♠ 10765
 ♥ 3
 ♦ 106
 ♣ AQJ965
 ♠ Q9
 ♥ QJ64
 ♦ A543
 ♣ 1043