



Bath Replays

39 Wise after (much after!) the event

Board 17, Thurs 23 July, 2009

Nothing special about the bidding. North opens a routine INT, South puts in a Stayman enquiry, hoping for a 4-4 heart fit but when North denies both majors, South bids 3 no trumps (good 12 points with some useful intermediate cards and a 5-card club suit).

East leads the $\diamond 4$. Declarer ducks in dummy, West puts in the Queen and, notwithstanding the chance of an unfavourable switch, declarer ducks in hand. West can't resist continuing the diamond suit and leads the $\diamond 3$, which runs to the now singleton Ace on the table.

Declarer takes stock. There are five top winners: 2 clubs, 2 diamonds and the Ace of spades. Clearly the club suit is likely to produce 3 extra tricks and it must be possible to set up a heart or two.

So what's the best way to play the Clubs? Well, there's a 78% chance of dropping a doubleton queen and of the remaining 22%, half of the time you'll be able to finesse against the queen once you've played one of your top honours.

So, which honour to play? There was no clue in the bidding so declarer just played the $\clubsuit K$ from dummy, unfortunately exposing the void in the West hand and had to give up a club to East, who then played another diamond to North's king.

North then could take his other club trick, but then had to lead away from the hearts or the spades and only ended up with 8 tricks.

So what could declarer have done differently?

At trick 1 East led the $\diamond 4$, and at trick two West shows up with the $\diamond 3$. Declarer holds the $\diamond 2$, so East must have led from a 4-card diamond suit. Presumably, then, he didn't have a five card suit, so cannot have a void. Therefore the only opponent who *could* have had a void is West. So declarer should make the necessary safety play at trick 3, playing a **small** club from dummy towards the Ace and then taking the marked finesse.

This hand was played on a Thursday night in July and it only took me until Saturday morning to work out the solution!

Peter van Praag
July 2009

- \spadesuit Q84
- \heartsuit K5
- \diamondsuit K52
- \clubsuit AJ952



- \spadesuit A9
- \heartsuit J987
- \diamondsuit A6
- \clubsuit K10763

- \spadesuit Q84
- \heartsuit K5
- \diamondsuit K52
- \clubsuit AJ952
- \spadesuit 107632
- \heartsuit AQ64
- \diamondsuit Q873
- \clubsuit -
- \spadesuit KJ5
- \heartsuit 1032
- \diamondsuit J1094
- \clubsuit Q84
- \spadesuit A9
- \heartsuit J987
- \diamondsuit A6
- \clubsuit K10763