



1 What do we know?

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This hand came up at Bournemouth earlier this year. You're sitting South, and the bidding has gone:

West	North	East	South
-	2♠	5♣	All pass

Partner's 2♠ is weak, showing a 6-card suit and 6-10 points.

♠	xx	
♥	Kxxxx	
♦	Kxxx	
♣	Ax	
♠	x	
♥	Q10xxx	
♦	Axxxx	
♣	xx	

You lead your singleton spade. Partner, North, wins with the Ace and returns the Queen, covered with the King by declarer and you ruff. That's two tricks. One more required. Before reading on, decide what you would now do and why.

What do we know? Declarer started with 4 spades, so still has 2 losers to deal with. Partner has shown up with 6 points in spades and presumably has the Jack as well, so is extremely unlikely to hold the ♥A. Give declarer at least 7 clubs for her 5♣ bid. If it's 8, there's nothing to be done, so assume it's just 7. So what is her unknown 13th card? Either it's a small heart or a diamond. Clearly, if you lay down your ♦A and declarer has a diamond, all is well ... but if she has a diamond void you've just given the contract away. Will you regret it if you don't cash the ♦A and then find she has a diamond?

The winning action (which might have been instinctive anyway) is to return a trump. This always works, because if declarer has a diamond she can cash her ♥A, cross to the ♣A and discard it on the ♥K, but can only ruff one of her 2 spade losers. And if she has a small heart, again she has three losers (2 spades and a heart) but can only deal with 2 of them (ruff one and park another on the ♥K).

The lesson I took from this hand is that at a crucial point when defending, try to think of an action that caters for all (or at least the most likely) possibilities for declarer's (or for that matter partner's) hand. Avoid rushing into the decision or simply hoping your instinct is correct.

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