

27/04/2020 Hand of the week 11: An interesting defence

Here is a hand I played with Martin in one of the online games on 6th April:

Hand layout showing cards for North (M27Evans), West (solar2000), East (RedSeat), and South (med029). A score of 2 is shown in the top left, and a 3♥x West indicator is in the bottom right.

North	East	South	West
	Pass	1♦	1♥
1♠	2♥	Double	Pass
2♠	Pass	Pass	3♥
Pass	Pass	Double	Pass out

The standard in the EBU games seems to be quite high, the average NGS for the field is normally around 55%. I have also noticed that the bidding can be quite aggressive! I opened 1♦ and West overcalled 1♥. We play weak jump overcalls, and I think I would have bid 2♥. This is helpful as it can take up more of the opponents bidding space. Martin's bid shows at least 5 spades, we would use a 'negative double' to show a 4 card suit.

After East comes in with 2♥ I decided to double to show a reasonable strength hand but without spade support. Martin subsequently shows his 6 card spade suit, and West comes in with 3♥.

Martin has showed no interest in either of the minors, and with 4 tricks off the top and a singleton spade it looks like we have a good defence so I doubled.

Martin leads a spade. Declarer wins in hand, and tries the K♥ to Martins Ace. Martin switches to 5♦, and I cash AK, Martin showing a doubleton, and then the A♣ to leave this position:

Hand layout showing the current position after several tricks. A score of 2 is shown in the top left, and a 3♥x West indicator is in the bottom right.

With South (myself) on lead, we have to take the contract 2 off to get a good score, as I could have made 4♦. We have 4 tricks so far and need 2 more- can you see how we make them?

The answer is to play a 3rd diamond. Martin's ruff forces out the Q♥ and makes my J♥ a boss. This is called a 'trump promotion'. After over-ruffing, declarer can lead the K♠ to force out the J♥, discarding a club, but I then cash the K♣ for 2 off.

Unfortunately, on the night I didn't find it! 1 off made us 51%, whereas 2 off would have been 96%. There are number of ways for the defence to make 6 tricks. Martin could have lead me a spade ruff after getting in with A♥, although he doesn't expect me to have the J♥. Alternatively, a club lead would have finessed the Q and given us 3 club tricks, but Martins concerns is that he is leading into a finesse. I actually think the defence we (almost!) found is the best one.

The key to the play is counting the shape of the hands and keeping an eye on high cards- easier said than done!