31/08/2020 Hand of the Week 29: Declarer play

This week, another declarer problem

	N med029		W	N	E	S
D 20	♠ A7		P	1NT	P	2♣
	♥ J432		P	2♥	P	3NT
	♦ A864		P	P	P	
	♣ QJ4					

W Richard_E		E RJR6950

♦3

S M27Evans
♠ 10986
♥ A106
♦ K2
♣ AK93

3NT N   NS: 0 EW: 0
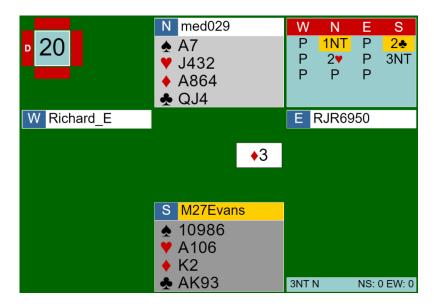
A fairly straightforward bidding sequence to 3NT

First, count your winner- 4 clubs, 2 diamonds and 2 Aces is 8 tricks.

What about losers? 3♦ should be 4th highest as you can see the 2♦, so you only have 2 diamond losers. If the defence can find a spade switch you might be in trouble.

There are potential tricks to develop in hearts to make your contract.
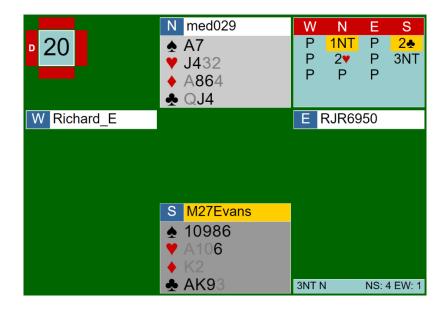
So how to proceed?

There isn't really any reason to duck the diamond, if you take the K♦ West will still be on guess as to who has the A♦- partner may have lead from Axxx. Ducking shows that you have the A♦ in hand and means you are more likely to get switch to spades which might cause problems.

Assuming 2 diamond losers you can safely lose 2 hearts so what is the best way to play the suit?

If hearts are breaking 3-3 there is no problem, if not there is still a good chance of making 2 tricks.

The line of play I chose was to lead towards the 10♥. I played to hand with a club and then lead a low heart, planning to cover if East played the K♥ or Q♥
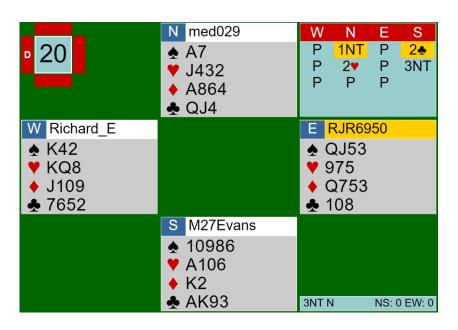
East played low, and West covered the 10♥ with the Q♥. West then returned a diamond which could be safely won with the A. I now cashed A♥ leaving this position after 5 tricks, with NS having won 4 and EW 1, and 2 rounds of hearts played:

I can now lead a low heart towards table, if West plays the K♥, it establishes the J♥. If West ducks I can safely play the J♥ knowing that if East wins the suit has split 3-3 and the 4♥ is now a winner!

At the table, West won the K♥. EW can win their diamonds but I have won 4 tricks so far, and have 3 clubs, the A♠ and J♥ for 9 tricks.

The full hand:

Although this play is good, it turns out it is not quite perfect!

In fact the textbook solution is to cash the A♥ first and then lead low towards the 10♥, as this gives a small additional advantage when the suit splits 5-1 with a singleton K or Q! The chances of making 2 heart tricks with this holding is 87%.