

09/11/2020 Hand of the Week 38: A problem for defence

An interesting defence came up in this hand last Thursday. East pre-empts in spades and West

The image shows a bridge hand interface. At the top left, a score of 18 is shown next to a diamond symbol. Below this, the player 'med029' (West) is shown with their hand: ♠ Q5, ♥ QJ9752, ♦ AK76, and ♣. In the center, the club suit is shown with cards ♣Q, ♣J, ♣3, and ♣A. To the right, the player 'Erika Pick' (East) is shown. At the bottom, the player 'hxjohn' (South) is shown with their hand: ♠ 4, ♥ K106, ♦ J98, and ♣ 98754. A bidding box at the top right shows: W 4♠, N P, E 3♠, S P. A status bar at the bottom right shows '4♠ E' and 'NS: 1 EW: 0'.

East pre-empts in spades, and West raises to game. A♣ is a reasonable lead and gives you a look at dummy. What to play next?

What do you make of partners Q♣?

With a singleton on table it does not seem reasonable to continue clubs, and this should be taken as suit preference showing the higher of the remaining suits- in this case hearts. Partner must surely have the A♥.

Can we tell anything else? East likely has 7 spades, so partner has 3.

We can't work out anything about diamonds at this stage, but that suit looks good for declarer.

So, can we take the contract off?

We have won a club, and if declarer holds 2 hearts we can make 2 heart tricks.

Entries to take through ruffs or diamonds mean that declarer can finesse spades if they are missing any the K♠, so they should be making 7 spade tricks and 2 diamonds- a club ruff would then make 10 tricks.

It looks likely the contract is making so we need to be careful not to give any overtricks if possible.

The danger of not leading hearts now is that declarer may be able to throw them on diamonds.

Let's trust partners signal and lead a heart...

18 D	N hxdavid	W	N	E	S
	♠ K87 ♥ A43 ♦ 1053 ♣ KQ62	4♠	P	3♠	P
W med029		E Erika Pick			
♠ Q5 ♥ QJ9752 ♦ AK76 ♣ J		♠ AJ109632 ♥ 8 ♦ Q42 ♣ 103			
	S hxjohn				
	♠ 4 ♥ K106 ♦ J98 ♣ A98754				
		4♠ E		NS: 0 EW: 0	

North wins the A♥. But then what?

North now needs to have a think before playing the next card!

It seems counter-intuitive but the best card to play now is the K♣

North can see that the K♠ is going to get finessed. By forcing dummy to ruff a club- Now North can duck the Q♠ when it is lead, and will win the K♠ to hold the contract to 10 tricks.

On the night all the declarers made 11 tricks.

Watch out for partners signals when defending!