

04/10/2021 Hand of the Week 77: The 'danger' hand

| | | | | | |
|----------|------------------------------------|-------|-----|-------------|-----|
| D 12 | N HXMayster | W | N | E | S |
| | ♠ KQ7 ♥ Q104 ♦ A4 ♣ 87542 | P | P | P | 1♥ |
| W med029 | ♦ A | 2♦ | 2NT | P | 3NT |
| | ♦ 5 | P | P | P | |
| | ♦ J | | | | |
| | ♦ 2 | | | | |
| | S hxpaulsim | | | | |
| | ♠ A64 ♥ A953 ♦ K862 ♣ KQ | | | | |
| | | 3NT N | | NS: 1 EW: 0 | |

South opens 1H, West overcalls 2♦, and NS end up in 3NT. The lead is marked and East starts with the J♦, won in hand with the A♦.

You have another stop in diamonds, west started with at least 5, so East has a singleton or more likely a doubleton.

Counting winner, we have 3 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds- 6 tricks.

It will be straightforward to develop a club trick- the remaining tricks need to be established in hearts- but how to play the suit?

The key to this hand is recognising that West is the 'danger' hand, so all attempts need to be made to keep them off lead to prevent them running their diamond suit.

You will have to lose at least 1 heart- the preferred option should be to finesse West for both the honours, this will give West only 1 entry to hand in hearts. You can't do anything about the A♣ and if this gives them another entry so be it.

The suggested play is to cross to hand with a spade and then play a low heart towards table. If West plays K♥, duck this, then win the diamond return in hand. Play a second low heart, and play the 10♥ from table if West plays low. If East gets in they won't have another diamond to lead, and you have to hope the A♣ is with East

If West ducks the first round play the 10♥ from table. If this wins you can return to hand with the K♦ to play a second round of hearts.

The full hand:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|-------------|-----|
| D 12 | N HXMayster | W | N | E | S |
| | ♠ KQ7 ♥ Q104 ♦ A4 ♣ 87542 | P | P | P | 1♥ |
| W med029 | | 2♦ | 2NT | P | 3NT |
| ♠ 983 ♥ KJ87 ♦ Q10953 ♣ 10 | | P | P | P | |
| | S hxpaulsim | E Erika Pick | | | |
| | ♠ A64 ♥ A953 ♦ K862 ♣ KQ | ♠ J1052 ♥ 62 ♦ J7 ♣ AJ963 | | | |
| | | 3NT N | | NS: 0 EW: 0 | |

As the cards lie this play might work- you could win 3 spades, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds and a club. Note that if you choose to play the Q♥ from table at trick 2, West has 2 entries to hand and can establish the diamonds.

West may spot that they cannot establish their diamonds, but the switch to clubs does not look promising, and with a lack of entries to East's hand the suit cannot be established in any case.

Is there a defence?

There is, but it is difficult to spot! West can put a spanner in the works by ducking the first round of hearts, then playing the K♥ on the second round and switching to a club which East must duck. Note that there are restricted entries to dummy and this play would block the heart suit and take out declarer's entry to the fourth heart. Declarer can then only win 2 heart tricks.

On the night 6 of the 8 pairs played in NT and no-one made more than 8 tricks.

- ♠
- ♦
- ♣
- ♥