

Board of the Week 12

By Dick Chapman

I much prefer club play to online play, but I do enjoy the weekly 8 board free BBO solitaire tournament. No masterpoints, no fee, unreliable robot partners, and no telling how strong or weak the field is, but it's still fun in small doses.

I sat West on this board, Robot East deals:

♠4			♠J1075
♥109842		D: E	♥AKQ
♦K54		V: N	♦J8
♣AKQ8			♣J1064
East	South	West	North
1♣	Pass	1♥	1♠
Double	2♠	4♥	All pass

North leads the king of spades which holds, then spade 8-10-A-ruff. What next? Make a plan before you read further.

It looks easy enough to draw trump if they are 3-2 or the singleton jack in either hand, play clubs ending in dummy, and lead a diamond up to the K54. You either make or you don't, a 50% shot that the diamond ace is in South. Is there a better plan?

How about a dummy reversal (sometimes called trump reversal)? My play:

Draw two top trump. Everyone follows and the jack is lurking out there by himself. Now ruff the third spade, low club to the jack, and ruff the fourth spade. Now top clubs. South ruffs the second one with the jack, but is end-played to start the diamonds. South put down the queen and it was easy after that. A low diamond would put me to the guess; to make, I would have to play low and hope the queen is on my right. As it was, I played the king and it held for my 8th trick. I still have the final club and a trump in dummy to make the contract. If North plays the diamond ace, the jack is the game-going trick. The deal:

	♠KQ983	
	♥65	
	♦A62	
	♣932	
♠4		♠J1075
♥109842		♥AKQ
♦K54		♦J8
♣AKQ8		♣J1064
	♠A62	
	♥J73	
	♦Q10973	
	♣75	

My play wasn't the best. Did you spot a slightly better line? See next column.

First, did you notice that South didn't ruff the fourth spade? Next, after ruffing the second spade, I should have played one heart, then ruff the third spade, then a second heart then ruff the fourth spade with my final trump (the 10) and hope it holds. If it does, then over to the club jack to draw the last trump, then three more clubs to make 10 tricks. However:

Even with this slightly better line of play, South can and should ruff the fourth spade with the jack. I will discard a diamond and the play is the same at that point. The "better line of play" turns out not to be better at all, and in fact the end position is the same. But I still should not have played two top trumps. And Robot South should have led a low diamond, not the queen, to put me on the guess.

Dummy reversal plays don't come up very often, but it's cool when they work. Ruffing in the hand with the long trump generally doesn't improve your trick count, but if you do it enough times that your trumps are shorter than those in dummy, you do gain. In this hand, I ruffed three times in hand and then had three trumps in dummy, 6 tricks on a 5-3 fit.

This isn't a perfect example of a dummy reversal, because South did have that heart jack to come in (either on the fourth spade or a club), and I didn't have access to dummy to draw that last trump. But the consequence of the attempt at a dummy reversal was that South was end-played into starting the diamond suit. Was that luck? Perhaps. My opponent in a 23-year online foursome says "LITROD":

Luck Is The Residue Of Design

By starting the trump reversal process, I stumbled into the good diamond position. Observe that the diamond suit is frozen: whoever starts it loses a trick, and in this case it was my South opponent.

Making 4 hearts was 93% of the matchpoints in a field of unknown strength. There were 15 tables; 2 other pairs were making, 11 were down 1 or more, and 1 was +50 for setting 2 spades.

Here's a special invitation to readers: come enjoy the fun on Friday night sometime! Thanks for reading my occasional reports.