

# Board of the Week 69

By Dick Chapman

Sometimes you are in a dubious contract and must make the most of the bad situation. The best players somehow seem to survive these conditions more often than the rest of us ordinary players. Today you get two boards for the price of one, each of which involved my inability to capitalize on facts as they evolved.

Sit West in a club matchpoint game:

♠KJ832 ♥A642 ♦ ♣A1042		♠54 ♥KJ9 ♦J742 ♣KQ86	
North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	1♦	1♠
2♦	Pass	Pass	2♥
3♦	3♥	All pass	

Maybe East should pass 3 diamonds, but here you are. Ruff the first diamond in hand and assess the situation. The only way this contract is making is hearts are 3-3, so make it that way. You lead a heart and lose to South's queen. Here is the ace of spades and another spade which you win. What now? Think 30 seconds then make a play.

Here's what I did: I drew trump in two more rounds (indeed they were 3-3). Now I'm out of trump, so I cashed four club tricks and conceded the rest, down 1. It makes 3 hearts per the hand record, so where did I go wrong?

The answer is I didn't count 9 tricks. My ruff is 1, the three trumps are 2 more, the four clubs are 4, and the spade king is 1...that's 8 tricks. Where is my 9th trick?

The answer to that is I should ruff another diamond! Normally we don't want to be forced, but here it would have been trick 9 for us. Get this: after the spade king, go to dummy with the club king, then ruff a second diamond. Now the ace of hearts and I'm out in hand but there is still one in dummy. Over to the queen of clubs and draw the final trump, again needing that 3-3 break and

getting it. Finish with the other two clubs. Now I have scored 2 diamond ruffs, 2 heart tricks, 1 spade, and 4 clubs. The full hand:

	♠Q97 ♥1075 ♦AQ98 ♣953	
♠KJ832 ♥A642 ♦ ♣A1042		♠54 ♥KJ9 ♦J742 ♣KQ86
	♠A106 ♥Q83 ♦K10653 ♣J7	

Notice this is an unusual trump reversal case. The classic case is a 5-4 trump fit where we ruff twice in the long hand then draw trump with the original short hand. But it works here as well: we ruff twice in the (relatively) long hand, bringing it down to fewer trump than dummy (2 opposite 3), then we draw trump with dummy's remaining trumps.

What do you think about South's opening 1 diamond call, third seat vulnerable? Double dummy, 3 diamonds can be set 2 for a cold top for EW, but even a +100 would be better than average for EW.

Remember (a) play the contract you are in, not the one you wish you were in, (b) put the cards where they need to be in order to make your bad contract, and (c) count your winners before you start playing off cards.

See the next page for the second board.

The second board was even worse:

♠K8742 ♥J98754 ♦ ♣52			♠3 ♥AK10 ♦AKJ ♣AKQ1064	
East	South	West	North	
2♣	Pass	2♦	Double	
3♣	Pass	3♥	Pass	
4♣	Pass	5♣	Pass	
6♣	All pass			

4 clubs was asking for key cards, but West didn't pick up on that and signed off in game. East (me) could/should have just passed but was enamored of what I knew was coming for the opening lead. I just need the spade ace or the heart queen from partner!

Sure enough, I got a diamond lead from South and won the jack, tossing a spade from dummy. Now trumps are coming in on three leads, South discarding the 10 of spades. Now comes the squeeze: I have five winning cards in hand, and I need South to hold the heart queen and unguard it. So, three clubs (South pitches 2 diamonds and the jack of spades). Then the ace of diamonds (South follows) and the king of diamonds (South discards the queen of spades).

Now what? With four cards left, I have this:

♠K8 ♥J9 ♦ ♣			♠3 ♥AK10 ♦ ♣	
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I am still thinking Plan A, which is to drop the heart queen doubleton. I failed to mention that along the way, North discarded the 2 of hearts. This was a very, very telling discard, and I didn't see it, focused as I was on South's play. I played off two top hearts, the queen didn't drop, and South took the final two tricks with the queen of hearts and the ace of spades. Down 1. Sorry, Partner.

Where did I go wrong?

The answer is if I'm going to squeeze someone, I should watch the discards. South discarded the 10, jack, and queen of spades, and North discarded the 2 of hearts. Dear

friends, who holds the queen of hearts? Was I even thinking? It was a casual online game and I admit to not thinking. I was just rattling off tricks hoping for some luck. But, as one of my regular opponents says, "LITROD." What is that? "Luck is the residue of design." Yes, I needed some luck, but I have to create the position to have and then use that luck. Here I created it and then ignored it. The final position is shown in the next column:

	♠965 ♥ ♦Q10 ♣	
♠K8 ♥J9 ♦ ♣		♠3 ♥AK10 ♦ ♣
	♠A ♥Q63 ♦ ♣	

It should have been clear to me that South is holding 3 hearts to the queen. I had 9 hearts to start, North discarded the 2 (and surely didn't have Qxx2 to start), so that leaves South with Qxx, plus one additional card. The only way to make is for South's other card to be the spade ace. So I should lead the 3 of spades. If North has the ace, I am never making the contract, since leading hearts would have also failed.

When I lead the spade to the bare ace, South wins perforce and now must lead a heart around to my tenace, so the slam rolls in. Why, why can I not see this at the table? I will tell myself it was midnight and a casual game, nothing on the line. But...would I get it right at the club when I am semi-awake? Here's the full deal (next page):

	♠965 ♥2 ♦Q109432 ♣J87	
♠K8742 ♥J98754 ♦ ♣52		♠3 ♥AK10 ♦AKJ ♣AKQ1064
	♠AQJ10 ♥Q63 ♦8765 ♣93	

Final question: what do you make of North's lead-directing double of 2 diamonds? Horrible, wasn't it? It didn't matter this time, because a good declarer can make 6 clubs on any lead, including a trump: win the opening lead, ruff the jack of diamonds, run the trumps as before, then AK of diamonds as before, and the squeeze is still on.

To my club partners: I promise to try to think better when I am in a dubious contract. To my opponents: you're welcome (not).

I hope you are enjoying my occasional articles. See you at the table.