

Board of the Week 77

By Dick Chapman

This week it's pretty simple, but you can still read if you wish just to see the sort of entertaining plays that come up at the table in an otherwise routine hand:

	♠AJ8 ♥A7654 ♦10876 ♣A	
♠10 ♥ ♦ ♣	V: EW D: W	♠6542 ♥ ♦ ♣
	♠KQ973 ♥3 ♦AK542 ♣K6	

West preempted 3 clubs and you get to 4 spades quickly enough. When dummy comes down you wonder what the East's tolerance for preempting vulnerable missing the AK of the suit. But stop wondering and play the board. Win the opening lead and start on trump. As expected the suit is dividing 4-1, so I put the trump holding up in the diagram.

Do you expect the diamond suit to divide 2-2? No, you do not. Preempts will mess with the distribution of the other suits if you consider "available spaces." So the diamond suit is blocked. Twice. You expect East to have the long holding in that suit. How do you score four diamonds and thus 12 tricks? It's very simple if you study just for a moment.

The secret is to draw all four trump. What do you discard on the fourth trump? A good diamond, that's what. Now two top diamonds from hand. Sure enough, the suit is 1-3. Exit with a diamond, which clears the suit from dummy. East will win and return a heart. Now it's even easier: win the heart in dummy, come to hand by ruffing a heart with your last trump, and claim. The two baby diamonds are good because you unblocked that fourth diamond from dummy on a trump. Here's the full deal:

	♠AJ8 ♥A7654 ♦10876 ♣A	
♠10 ♥K109 ♦3 ♣QJ987542	V: EW D: W	♠6542 ♥QJ62 ♦QJ9 ♣103
	♠KQ973 ♥3 ♦AK542 ♣K6	

Normally we unblock by playing high cards under other high cards of the same suit, to get out of our own way. But here we accomplish the same result by playing a high card under a trump.

This was played in a team game, so the overtrick wasn't all that important. At matchpoint pairs it might make a huge difference, depending on the field.

I suppose West justified the vulnerable preempt because it was an eight card holding. Good enough, except in this case NS can make 500 for setting the contract two. Of course, if you are going to play the board double dummy, you don't collect 500...you bid the slam for 980.

At my table, we were sure that Evelyn would make the same play at the other table, and of course she did. So was there no gain to either team? No, there was a gain: the entertainment value of the play, even knowing that the other declarer would do it the same way.

Try explaining to a non-player why this makes bridge a worthwhile activity. You won't be able to, but anyone reading this article knows exactly what I'm talking about. You don't sell bridge by saying "We tied, but there was an interesting play at trick 5." No, you sell bridge by saying "This game is fun."

See you at the club.