

Board of the Week 82

By Dick Chapman

This week you get a board with little educational value, one that should have been a disappointment (because of a flawed auction) but which turned out to be delightful. Imps pairs, North deals, NS vulnerable. As West, hold these cards:

♠63 ♥AKQ9643 ♦943 ♣10

Partner opens 1 diamond in second seat, you bid 1 heart. The passed-hand North comes in 1 spade, partner 2 diamonds. What is your call?

It looks like 3 hearts. But I quite typically overbid this. I have far too many losers for 4 hearts, but it was one for the road and here I am in game on the lead of the spade queen:

♠63 ♥AKQ9643 ♦943 ♣10	♠K7 ♥J7 ♦AK876 ♣Q643
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Dummy's spade king just evaporated and now I don't see any way to make. Two spades, maybe three clubs, and a diamond for losers. Down 3?

Wait. There is some small educational value, this suggestion: the defenders can't see your cards and may not play optimally. Never give up. Here we go:

Lose two spades and South leads the ace of clubs (?), North following with an encouraging 7 (standard carding). Will South continue? Yes. Here is the 8 of clubs, and now things are looking up. Maybe. I have lost three tricks so have to ruff this lead, but I see a plan. Here's my question to readers: from this point, how am I going to make the contract? I don't have music for you, but give it some thought. See next column when you are ready.

Ready? We know North has the club king. We don't know how the diamonds are divided, but the best plan is a squeeze. Here's the board with the first four tricks dimmed:

	♠QJ854 ♥8 ♦Q105 ♣K752	
♠63 ♥AKQ9643 ♦943 ♣10		♠K7 ♥J7 ♦AK876 ♣Q643
	♠A1092 ♥1052 ♦J2 ♣AJ98	

I led five hearts. Put yourself in the North seat and make 4 discards. It's easy: 3 spades and a club. Now you are down to these cards...

♠ ♥ ♦Q105 ♣K

...and dummy has these:

♠ ♥ ♦AK8 ♣Q

Uh-oh, at trick 10 here is the final trump from the closed hand. What do you discard, North? If a club, I will discard a diamond and claim (my losing diamond goes on the club queen). If a diamond, I will discard the club queen from dummy and try to drop the diamond queen (I don't know this will work, but it's my only shot). In the actual play, North discarded a diamond and the game came rolling in when the remaining four diamonds were 2-2.

As mentioned, the defenders can't see all the cards. A passive exit (a trump) at trick 3 would produce a club and a diamond trick toward the end. Or, with x-ray vision, South could underlead the ace of clubs. Or, North can overtake the second spade and lead clubs. From my perspective, I should not cover the spade queen at trick 1 so as to force South to be on lead after trick 2 (and thus keep North from leading clubs). But the overall defense is for South to guard clubs and North to guard diamonds. South must not lead the ace of clubs: this puts both guards in the North and sets up the squeeze.

So, like many hands of bridge, this one was full of errors. As our mentor Al Childs once said, when asked about some detailed part of his complex system, (imagine his voice) "The way to win this game is play good bridge." I paraphrase this by saying that at the club level, you don't have to make one brilliant play in order to win. Just reduce errors. My 4 heart bid was a terrible error. But South returned the favor with the club ace at trick 3; this set up the squeeze, game making.

See next page for final comments.

Take away those errors and play double dummy bridge. I should be in 3 hearts making, for EW +140, right?

Wrong. Double dummy this makes 4 spades by NS! So it appears that the par score is +650 for NS. Right?

Wrong. Since I can make 3 hearts on any defense, the par score is +300 for NS, as the par contract is 5 hearts doubled, down 2.

Or, as you may have noticed, 5 diamonds doubled, down 2, for the same +300 for NS.

Final comments about the auction: as North I wouldn't come in with 1 spade, vulnerable, with that lousy suit, EW both bidding, and partner silent. Turns out spades are making, but I like my sandwich bids to be more disciplined. Experts might disagree with this approach. As South, if I hear my partner come in with 1 spade in the sandwich seat, I am certainly not passing 2 diamonds by East when I hold 10 hcp and A1092 of partner's suit. Should East rebid the five card diamond suit? I won't answer that one.

See you at the table.