

## The Pips Matter

It pays to take a moment to study the hand and the initial lead. There are many hands where there are alternate lines of play, with no obvious preferred line. We all like high cards, but equally important is to examine the pips in suits you wish to establish and most importantly in trumps.

Board 3 on Tuesday was a case in point.

With 25 combined points and a 4-4 heart fit, four tables were in the heart game and three in 3NT. Only one of the four declarers in 4♥ made the contract and that no doubt was assisted by the Q♦ lead.

Deep Finesse (Double Dummy) states that there are eleven tricks available in hearts, but three declarers went off and one two off. Dare I say that they didn't give the play enough thought. The key to the hand is the heart pips, all are good except the missing Ace and Jack. Cashing your winners then cross ruffing is a good plan, assisted by the fact that the spades and diamonds break 3-3. This line copes with the 4-1 trump break and the defender with the long hearts cannot attack hearts without giving up a trick.

As the cards lie, eleven tricks are available by finessing the diamond through West and finessing the heart through East. An unlikely scenario. It is important not to squander your entries to dummy and give up the spade trick before the defence can force in clubs.

So, win club lead in dummy.

Heart to the eight

Run J♦, then diamond to the king.

Heart to the nine.

K♠ losing to the ace.

Win club return

K♥ losing to the ace

No return hurts, you can take out the last trump and claim.

Anyone finding this line should be applauded.

Next time they will lose to the Q♦ and J♥ when the finesses are wrong with the two major aces.

This is what makes the game such fun, hands arise where there is no right way to play the contract.