

As has been remarked before, when bridge is played face-to-face there is no record of how the bidding and play has gone. That makes it hard to produce an accurate report on the night's events, but it leaves the bulletin writer an easy excuse for letting their imagination wander.

Let's see what might have happened on Board 1.

	♠ 9	
	♥ 8	
	♦ K98754	
	♣ AK1084	
♠ AKJ1074		♠ 63
♥ Q92		♥ 107653
♦ -		♦ 63
♣ J963		♣ Q752
	♠ Q852	
	♥ AKJ4	
	♦ AQJ102	
	♣ -	

This was played in 5D+1, 6D=, and 3NT+2. Clearly 6D is the best contract - well done, Richard & Dorothy! But I wonder what happened when the contract was 3NT? Deep Finesse says that 11 tricks are available if South plays the contract, but can you see what Declarer must do, if West begins with ♠ A and continues with a small Club?

Have a think. I'll come back to this later.

Let's look at Hand 19, where East/West hold:-

♠ A753	♠ K62
♥ AQ974	♥ J82
♦ 1083	♦ J64
♣ 4	♣ Q1075

Suppose that West reaches an over-adventurous 3H, after South opens 1D and the bidding (Acol) continues 1H, 1S, 2H, 3C, 3H followed by three passes.

The defence take three rounds of Diamond (North following throughout), and continue with a Spade, won in Dummy. With a Club and a Spade still to lose, Declarer needs quite a bit of luck to escape for one down. West tries a low trump from Dummy to the Queen, but this loses to North's King. North continues with a high Spade, on which South discards a Club, and West wins the trick with the Ace.

Here is the position we have reached.

♠ 75	♠ 6
♥ A974	♥ J8
♦ -	♦ -
♣ 4	♣ Q1075

There are tricks still to lose in Spades and Clubs, but can Declarer ruff his second Spade in Dummy and pick up the trumps? West continues with a Spade and the Defence play two rounds of Clubs, Declarer ruffing the second round to arrive at the following stage.

♠ 7	♠ -
♥ A97	♥ J8
♦ -	♦ -
♣ -	♣ Q10

Have you worked out what South has left? The clues are all there!

The initial play in Diamonds, along with the opening bid, shows that South started with exactly 4 cards in the suit. South bid 3C, and has shown up with a singleton Spade. That gives him a 1444 distribution, and indeed the standard opening with such hands is 1D.

In particular, South now has all the outstanding trumps, 10, 6, 5. Do you see how West can finish off? The ♠7 is ruffed with ♥J, and Dummy plays ♥8. South can't afford to cover with the 10, but the lead is left in Dummy, and Declarer takes the last two tricks with the A, 9 of trumps sitting over the 10, 6 in South's hand. A pretty ending perhaps, but small consolation for going two down for a cold bottom!

Let's return to Board 1. After West begins with the Ace of Spades and a club continuation, Declarer rattles off six rounds of Diamonds, to reach:-

	♠ -	
	♥ 8	
	♦ -	
	♣ K1084	
♠ KJ		♠ 6
♥ Q92		♥ 107
♦ -		♦ -
♣ -		♣ Q7
	♠ Q8	
	♥ AKJ	
	♦ -	
	♣ -	

On ♣ K South lets go of ♠ 8, but what can West do? A Heart discard, unguarding the Queen, would be fatal, so West has to throw ♠ J.

Now Declarer crosses to ♥ A:-

	♠ -	
	♥ -	
	♦ -	
	♣ 1084	
♠ K		♠ 6
♥ Q9		♥ 10
♦ -		♦ -
♣ -		♣ Q
	♠ Q	
	♥ KJ	
	♦ -	
	♣ -	

South can then exit with ♠ Q, forcing West to lead a heart back to the K, J.

Did you figure that one out?

Best wishes to all, Roger Heath-Brown