

This week I'm going to take a closer look at Board 11. At three tables this was played in 2H by East, after South opened 1NT or a short 1C. Here is the South hand. What would you choose for your opening lead? A Club looks safest, but at two of the tables Dummy had bid 2C during the auction.

♠ KJ75
♥ AQ74
♦ K2
♣ 1084

In practice the three Souths chose three different leads, the ♣8 (at the table where clubs had not been bid), the ♠5, and the ♦K. This last choice looks pretty brave to me, but let's see how the play developed. Here is what South sees when Dummy goes down.

♠ Q103
♥ 2
♦ AQ63
♣ KQJ32
♠ KJ75
♥ AQ74
♦ K2
♣ 1084

Your ♦K is immediately swallowed by Dummy's Ace, but surely declarer would have finessed it at some stage even if you hadn't led it. Declarer then leads the ♥2 to the 8 from hand, and you win with the Queen.

Your hope in leading the doubleton ♦K was to score a ruff, and so you continue with ♦2, which Declarer wins with the Jack in the closed hand. The ♥J comes next...

♠ Q103
♥ -
♦ Q63
♣ KQJ32
♠ KJ75
♥ A74
♦ -
♣ 1084

Should you win or duck? If you want a Diamond ruff you need to put partner in. North might hold the Ace of either black suit as an entry, but they might also hold ♥K. You are unlikely to score two Diamond ruffs, since one or other of Partner or Declarer has at most a singleton left, so there is no advantage in grabbing your ♥A now – and it would be disastrous if partner holds ♥K bare.

So you play ♥4 on the Jack. Partner wins with the King, and gives you your Diamond ruff. You have ♥A and ♠K to come, and Partner turns up with ♣A for one down. Well done to Carol and Rita for this nice defence!

♠ Q103	♠ A42
♥ 2	♥ J109853
♦ AQ63	♦ J107
♣ KQJ32	♣ 5

Deep Finesse says that East should make 2H, so what went wrong? Here is what declarer sees when ♦K is led. How would you plan the play?

After winning ♦K with the Ace on table, Dummy looks short of entries, particularly if the defence are ruffing Diamonds - as seems likely given the lead. Declarer has one or two losing Spades, and these might be discarded on Dummy's Clubs once the Ace has gone. So Declarer probably does best to start on Clubs straight away.

That is certainly the winning play as the cards lie, as this was the full hand.

	♠ 986	
	♥ K6	
	♦ 9854	
	♣ A976	
♠ Q103		♠ A42
♥ 2		♥ J109853
♦ AQ63		♦ J107
♣ KQJ32		♣ 5
	♠ KJ75	
	♥ AQ74	
	♦ K2	
	♣ 1084	

After knocking out ♣A declarer can get to Dummy with ♦ Q to discard two Spades on the top Clubs, all before attacking trumps. The defence can still get their Diamond ruff, but no longer have a Spade trick.

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