

Hi everyone – It's Roger Heath-Brown again. Congratulation to last night's winners – Ruth & Judy. For those of you who weren't playing, let me start by mentioning Board 16, which was played in 4♠ by NS at one table, and by EW at others (apparently without any misclicks). Is this a record for Summertown? Does anyone know of a 5-level contract being attempted in both directions? The hand in question had the EW spades 4-3, with South holding the remaining 6, so one can see that both contracts might look plausible.

♠ A109
♥ A3
♦ QJ8
♣ AKQ76

♠ Q852
♥ J9876
♦ K2
♣ 53

For a more detailed look at a hand, I've chosen board 6, played by North in 3NT at each table.

Every declarer received the ♦ 6 as an opening lead, and the question is, how should one plan the play?

If the Clubs produce 5 tricks, we can count on two more in Diamonds, together with the major suit Aces; and we will probably look to spades for an overtrick. If the Clubs split 4-2 we will need the major suits to provide our ninth trick, and again Spades seem the most likely source.

So we are going to win the first diamond trick, with the King say, and now, should we test the clubs, or see at once whether we can do something in Spades? Trying Clubs first might give the defence discard problems.

♠ A109
♥ A3
♦ QJ
♣ -

♠ Q85
♥ J98
♦ 2
♣ -

In fact the Clubs split 3-3, and when we run the suit East throws a Spade and a Diamond at some tables, and two Spades at others, leaving this position.

Should one now play a Diamond, to guarantee our ninth trick? But the defence will probably do that for us anyway, if we try a Spade. And with rather few Spades out we should be able to read the position. So maybe we should play on spades here.

Suppose though that we take the cautious line. We play the ♦ Q, which East wins, and returns another Diamond. That leaves at most two Diamonds out, and there is now no risk to our contract in playing the ♠ 10. If East has an honour he will surely be tempted to play it, setting up our second Spade trick. And if East does play low it is more likely to have been from the Jack than the King – Wouldn't he want to get in to cash his Diamond winner(s) if he had the King? Sure enough, the trick goes 10, J, Q, K and we have our tenth trick.

There are many other routes to 10 tricks – well done to those who got there!