

Hi everyone – It’s Roger Heath-Brown here. Today I’ve decided to take a closer look at board 13, which was of course “unlucky for some”. This is what happened when Paul & I (EW) played Krys (N) & Sandra (S).

	♠ Q9654	
	♥ QJ5	
	♦ Q104	
	♣ 87	
♠ AK87		♠ J1032
♥ 1086		♥ K7
♦ 5		♦ K973
♣ A10952		♣ K63
	♠ -	
	♥ A9432	
	♦ AJ862	
	♣ QJ4	

North deals at Game All, and after two passes South, playing 4 card majors, opens 1H. With EW silent, North responds 1S, South says 2D, and North gives preference to 2H, which is passed out. In fact the hand was played in 2H (or 3H) at 6 out of the 7 tables. Deep Finesse says 9 tricks are available.

At tables where NS play 5 card majors, Hearts are agreed without Diamonds being mentioned, so it is natural for West to begin with the singleton ♦ 5. But with the auction above West decides not to lead up to Declarer’s second suit, and chooses instead a trump. This goes to

the Queen, King and Ace, and although the lead has killed East’s ♥ K, West’s 10,8 provide a trump trick in compensation. Declarer now ducks a trump, and wins West’s trump return, leaving this position, with the lead in dummy.

	♠ Q9654	
	♥ -	
	♦ Q104	
	♣ 87	
♠ AK87		♠ J103
♥ -		♥ -
♦ 5		♦ K973
♣ A10952		♣ K63
	♠ -	
	♥ 94	
	♦ AJ862	
	♣ QJ4	

What should East do when ♦ Q is led from dummy?

Have a think before reading on.

If East covers, Declarer can win and return to dummy’s ♦ 10, and when West shows out there is a marked finesse to pick up East remaining Diamonds. However if East plays low on ♦ Q and covers ♦ 10 instead, Declarer can no longer get to dummy to finesse East’s ♦ 9. Declarer can then be restricted to 8 tricks, losing a trump, a Diamond, and 3 Clubs.

Did you like declarer’s duck on the second round of trumps? It meant, in the diagram above, that West could not interfere with the play of the Diamonds by ruffing at an inopportune moment.

But the BBO double-dummy analysis shows that it is better to win the second round of trumps in dummy and play on Diamonds, leaving West still holding the master trump.

♠ Q9654	
♥ 5	
♦ Q104	
♣ 87	
♠ AK87	♠ J1032
♥ 10	♥ -
♦ 5	♦ K973
♣ A10952	♣ K63
♠ -	
♥ 943	
♦ AJ862	
♣ QJ4	

Now if East ducks ♦ Q but the next trick is ♦ 10, ♦ K, ♦ A, ? should West ruff? Would you ruff?

That would leave:-

♠ Q9654	
♥ 5	
♦ 4	
♣ 87	
♠ AK87	♠ J1032
♥ -	♥ -
♦ -	♦ 97
♣ A10952	♣ K63
♠ -	
♥ 943	
♦ J86	
♣ QJ4	

Now the defence can take only the top Clubs, since Declarer can eventually reach dummy with a Club ruff to take the marked Diamond finesse.

That would be 2H+2. But if West declines to ruff with ♥10 Declarer must eventually lose 3 Club tricks for 2H+1.

A close inspection of the Traveller shows that everyone found lots of opportunities to go wrong on this hand, with Paul & me being no exception.

That's why we love the game – there is always scope to do better!