

Hi everyone – It’s Roger Heath-Brown again. We had another interesting collection of hands yesterday. Congratulation to the winners – Jenny & Sandra, to runners-up Sandra & Kryz, and to Moira and Trevor in 3rd place.

♠ Q2	♠ K10
♥ 1075	♥ KJ92
♦ 109742	♦ AKQ
♣ Q32	♣ A975

Here is Board 1, which was played in 3♦ by West at our table.

North leads ♠A. How do you assess the hand? Think now, before reading on.

There are many ways the play could develop. At our table North played a trump at trick 2. Declarer took out a second round, finding that the split was 3-2. Then, leaving the last trump outstanding, a club was played to the Queen. However this lost to North’s King, and a trump was returned, won by in Dummy.

♠ Q	♠ K
♥ 1075	♥ KJ92
♦ 109	♦ -
♣ 32	♣ A97

Here is the position, with the lead in Dummy to play.

Declarer now played Ace and another club, won by South, with North discarding a spade. South exited with his last club, and declarer ruffed, leaving:-

♠ Q	♠ K
♥ 1075	♥ KJ92
♦ 10	♦ -
♣ -	♣ -

The defenders have only spades and hearts left, and we need 4 more tricks. We will have to hope that North holds the ♥Q - In fact she has Qxx. But even so Declarer seems short of entries to finesse twice.

Can you see what Declarer must do?

The only solution is for the last diamond to be cashed, discarding Dummy’s ♠K! Then, when Declarer runs the ♥10, losing to South’s Ace, a spade return puts Declarer back in hand to repeat the heart finesse, while a heart return goes up to Dummy’s tenace.

So what was your initial assessment of the hand? Declarer seems badly short of entries, and if we require heart tricks we will want to lead twice from hand. So why not unblock the ♠K under North’s Ace at trick 1? That will give Declarer an extra entry with the ♠Q. You may not be at your sharpest at trick 1 of hand 1, but the Robots, also playing in Diamonds with the ♠A lead, found exactly this play.