



HANDS OF INTEREST

This is the first declarer problem in a new column that is intended to be educational, while achieving a balance between being undemanding and difficult.

The hands will come from club play where possible - and members are invited to submit a suitable hand that they have observed or experienced.

We'll start with this one - assume best defence!

NORTH

♠ Q 9 2

♥ A 4

♦ 8 6 3 2

♣ 9 5 4 2

DECLARER

♠ A J T 4

♥ 6 5

♦ K Q J

♣ A K Q J

The contract is 3NT. Plan the play on the lead of ♥K.

How can declarer make 9 tricks without losing the lead after winning ♥A? The defence has ♦A and then heart winners to cash, so what is the plan?

Focus should be on the careful play of the spade suit to avoid a blockage. Declarer needs four tricks from spades to go with one ♥ trick and four ♣ tricks to make 9 tricks, and after the lead, declarer is in dummy for the only time. Declarer must assume that the ♠K is onside for the contract to succeed, but **furthermore** should consider how to play if the suit is divided 2/4 (more likely than 3/3).

Now, in order to pick up the king, the **key play** is to start by running the ♠9, (not the Q) and when that holds follow with the Q. This enables four tricks if East has K x x x. If you start by running the Q, and East does not cover, you will only make 3 spade tricks. If you play the 4 on the Q, you are stuck in hand after the second spade, and if you play the ten or jack under the Q, it will promote East's fourth card after East covers the 9. Let's say the spade suit divides: 6 5 - K 8 7 3.

Tip: Consider how best to play a suit combination when you have only one entry to dummy.

(Hands of Interest is sourced and written by Richard Rule; if you have questions or would like to suggest a hand for inclusion, please drop him an email or write via secretary@wallingfordbridgeclub.org.uk)