

Teaser No. 19

♠ 9 6 3

♥ 8 6

♦ K Q J 5 4

♣ A 7 3

LOVE all, Dealer: South

Contract: 3NT by South

Lead: 2♠

E/W Silent

♠ A K 5

♥ A K 7 4

♦ 3 2

♣ K 8 5 4

Plan the play – it's a teams' match.

## Solution Teaser No. 19

It is best to win at trick one, for with a spade trick in the bag the defence might switch to hearts. The lead of the two of spades suggests the suit is breaking 4-3 so there should not be any danger of losing three tricks in the suit.

Three diamond tricks is enough for the contract so you should make the key play of ducking a round. Lead from hand and play LOW from dummy. This protects you against any 4-2 break. The defence scores a cheap trick, but cannot prevent you from driving out the ace and setting up the long diamond whilst you still have an outside entry to dummy. Picture East with, say, A1076. If you play a top diamond on the first round they can kill the suit by ducking, holding you to just two tricks and thereby defeating the contract. West, with a similar holding, could do likewise by ducking the first round and ducking again when you lead a second diamond towards dummy. In practice, East would also defeat you by ducking with ace doubleton.

Playing duplicate pairs it would be far less clear to play safely for nine tricks. The possibility of a 3-3 break or AX onside offers a tantalising chance of an overtrick. Although the odds are a bit against on paper, there is the possibility of imperfect

defence at some tables. On the occasions when optimism should lead to defeat, any defender that takes their ace of diamonds on the first round lets declarer off the hook. This consideration needs to be factored in and may well persuade you to go for broke!

The safety play, correct at teams' scoring, forces the defence to win their first trick whilst there is still a link with dummy in diamonds. To underline the principle, here is a similar diamond matrix, the rest of the N/S hands are unchanged:

A Q J 8 4

7 5

Again needing three tricks, it is right to duck the first round lest East holds K10XX. Finessing the queen allows East to hold off and now you make just one more trick in the suit.