

Teaser No. 21

♠ K Q 10 3

♥ 7 6

♦ J 10 8 7 5 3 2

♣

GAME all, Dealer: South

Contract: 4♠ by South

Lead: 3♥

E/W Silent

♠ A 8 6 5 2

♥ A 5

♦ Q 9

♣ A 8 3 2

Plan the play – its rubber bridge.

Solution Teaser No. 21

The lesson to be learnt from this hand is the same as Teaser No. 20: think twice before taking an obvious looking discard. The opening lead has set up a heart trick for the defence. It would be easy to win the first trick and then play the ace of clubs at trick two, throwing away the heart loser in dummy. This looks attractive but would be a mistake as it seriously jeopardises the contract if the trumps are breaking 3-1. Parting with the top club allows the defence to punch dummy twice. That is, each time they gain the lead in diamonds they can lead a card that forces dummy to ruff. Having taken the discard, defeat is certain if three rounds of trumps are drawn before playing on diamonds. You might survive by drawing just one or two trumps and then switching to diamonds, but only in the unlikely possibility that the defender with the long trumps also started with at least three diamonds.

It is much stronger play to win at trick one and test the trump suit by cashing the king and ace. If the suit breaks 2-2, you can afford to take two ruffs in dummy. Therefore it is safe to throw the heart loser on the ace of clubs and then play on diamonds. All you lose is two top diamonds.

In the more likely event that spades break 3-1, you draw the last trump but eschew the discard and play on diamonds straight away. The defence can cash a heart trick when in with their first diamond winner but can then do no better than switch to clubs. You win with the ace and knock out the other top diamond. Dummy is now high and you can claim. Keeping hold of that ace of clubs meant they could only make dummy ruff once and that you were guaranteed to enjoy the established diamonds winners (of which there are several more than needed!)

Yes, there is a possibility a defender with AKX in diamonds might shine by ducking the first round of the suit. This would be a very difficult play to find. In any case, it's most unlikely that such a holding exists for West would probably have led a diamond with either AKX or a small singleton in the suit.