

Teaser No. 23

♠ 3 2

♥ 2

♦ K Q J 10 9 8 7

♣ 4 3 2

LOVE all, Dealer: South

Contract: 6♠ by South

Lead: K♥

E/W Silent

♠ A K 7 6 5 4

♥ A 5 4 3

♦ A 2

♣ A

Plan the play – its duplicate pairs.

Solution Teaser No. 23

6D is a sounder slam, with excellent chances of making all thirteen tricks on any lead. However, just making 6S scores more than 6D+1 and there are bound to be some pairs that don't venture beyond game. Plus 980 is likely to be a near top and it is too late to compete with anyone bidding and making 7D (well done to them!)

The contract depends on trumps breaking 3-2, plus a little bit of care! At matchpoint scoring it's not a bad place to be. In order to enjoy those lovely diamonds in safety it is essential to clear all of the outstanding trumps. Playing ace, king and another is not an option, for the opponents will be able to cash three heart tricks. You could try ruffing two hearts in dummy, then cash two top trumps, and then play on diamonds. If the defender with the master trump has to follow to two rounds of diamonds the final heart loser goes away in time. It would be no surprise, though, if the opponent with the long trump was short in diamonds. If that is the case, they will ruff in and cut you off from dummy. Alternatively, you could ruff two hearts in dummy and then play three rounds of trumps. If the opponent that wins their side's trump trick is out of hearts you are in luck, but if they do have a heart it will be cashed and that is one down.

Both of these plans have an extra way of failing: it is possible that you might sustain an over-ruff on the third round of hearts. This would be OK if the over-ruff was with a natural trump trick, but if East started with just two trumps there is no recovery. Note that West wouldn't necessarily bid over 1S with a six card heart suit. It is also possible the lead is from KQ doubleton, and that West could ruff in front of dummy on the third round of the suit, fatal if West also started with a doubleton in trumps.

The best solution by far is to duck a round of trumps at trick two. There is still a trump in dummy to deal with a heart lead and barring an unlikely defensive ruff you are home. Win their return, draw trumps and run the diamonds.