

Teaser No. 27

♠ Q 9 6 5 4



♦ J 10 6

♣ K J 6 5 3

Love all, Dealer: South

Contract: 5♣ by South

Lead: 5♦

E/W Silent.

♠ K 8

♥ A Q 5 4 2

♦ A 2

♣ A 9 7 2

The 10♦ is played from dummy and East covers with the Q.  
Plan the play – it's a teams' match.

## Solution Teaser No. 27

This is a hand played by Bob Hamman, one of the most successful players of all time. Explaining his line of play in an interview after the match, he cited the tool of logic known as Occam's Razor. In layman's terms, this says that the simplest answer to a problem - the one which makes the fewest assumptions - is usually best.

The key to playing this hand well is to avoid making any unnecessary assumptions.

Firstly, look at the trump suit. It lacks solidity, so attempting a cross-ruff is not a good idea. Sooner or later you may be over-ruffed and that is curtains. The correct play is to draw trumps and then set up the spade suit. How should the trumps be played given that you cannot afford to lose a trick in the suit? With a nine card fit missing the queen the odds are very marginally in favour of playing for the drop, but tactical reasons make this clearly the right play here. If trumps break 2-2, there are still two trumps in the South hand and it will be easy to cope with any 4-2 break of the spade suit. If, instead, you take the trump finesse there is still a major problem even if it wins. If a third round is cashed in order to

draw the queen, there is only one trump left in hand. If the queen is not drawn it might score a trick by ruffing, or it might be led if West wins a trick with the ace of spades, again reducing declarer to just one trump. Whichever way you go, the contract only makes if spades break evenly or if East holds AX, and can therefore be established with a single ruff. (Leading from dummy and then ducking the second round caters for AX with East) It is better to play for one thing to go well rather than for a combinations of things to do so. Playing for the drop of the queen of clubs makes an assumption about the trump suit whereas taking the finesse makes assumptions about both trumps and spades.

Secondly, look at the diamond suit. It is not clear who holds the outstanding honour. This would also be true if East had played the king at trick one, potentially a deceptive ruse holding both missing honours. There is a threat to the contract if East was dealt both diamond honours. If West obtains the lead with the ace of spades, a diamond lead through dummy followed by another diamond will force you to ruff. That's not good news as you may need both of your remaining trumps to ruff spades with. It is best to avoid making any assumptions about the missing honour and to throw a diamond from dummy on the ace of hearts. This gives up on the possibility of a second trick in the suit but that does not matter too much as a second trick will not be needed if spades

break no worse than 4-2. The advantage is that a third round of diamonds would now permit a ruff and discard, and the ruff can be taken in dummy.

So, Bob's line was to win at trick one, cash the ace of hearts throwing a diamond, cash the top trumps (dropping the queen!) and then lead a spade from dummy with a view to establishing the suit by ruffing in hand. All of this was necessary as West held: ♠A3, ♥K10863, ♦9543, ♣108.

Eleven tricks were made by way of five trumps in dummy, two red suit aces, one top spade, two spade ruffs in hand, and one length winner (the fifth spade).