

Teaser No. 31

♠ 6 5 3 2

♥ J 2

♦ 7 5 4 2

♣ 9 5 2

Love all, Dealer: South

Contract: 4♠ by South

Lead: K♥

E/W silent

Trumps break 3-1, West discards a ♥ on second round

♠ A K 8 7 4

♥ A

♦ A K J 6

♣ A K 3

Plan the play – it's a teams' match.

Solution Teaser No. 31

Two top trumps reveal that East has a winner, so you have a certain loser in both trumps and clubs and it's all about not losing two tricks in diamonds. There is a danger of this if either opponent was dealt four or five cards in the suit.

The solution caters for any 4-1 division of the diamonds, without jeopardising your chances should they break normally. The key move is to cash precisely one top diamond, and then play ace, king and another club. (Note that you have already catered for the possibility of a singleton queen of diamonds!)

If West wins their only safe exit is a heart. You ruff this and exit with a trump. If East now plays a diamond you try the jack. This is a 'safety finesse'. If it loses it means the suit has broken 3-2 and there is no further loser. If East is out of diamonds any card they play allows a ruff and discard.

If East wins the third round of clubs, they will no doubt cash their trump winner. It does not help them if they don't. If they now play a diamond you take the safety finesse as above and are home regardless of whether it wins or loses. If,

instead, they play a heart you have a choice of plays, both of which guarantee the contract.

1) Discard a diamond. West wins but is endplayed.

2) Ruff and exit with a low diamond. If the diamonds do not break 3-2 the player that wins this trick is endplayed.

In both cases the victim must either lead a diamond (if they have one) into your KJ , or else allow you a ruff and discard by leading a heart or club.

Failure to cash one top diamond before exiting in clubs may lead to defeat if diamonds break 4-1 and East wins the third round of clubs. At this point East will cash their trump winner and play a diamond. There is no hope if this a singleton. Sooner or later West obtains the lead and will still have a safe exit in hearts. If the diamond is from a four card holding then the odds heavily favour finessing the jack, but trying this loses the contract if West was dealt a singleton queen.