

Teaser No. 32

♠ A J 4

♥ A 9 7 6 2

♦ A 4 2

♣ 10 5

N/S GAME, Dealer: South

Contract: 4♥ by South

Lead: 2♣

South opens 1♣ (11-13 balanced hand), West overcalls 1♠,

North bids 2♠ (transfer to Hearts, game forcing)

At trick one East plays the Q♣.

♠ Q 6 2

♥ K 8 5 3

♦ 9 6 3

♣ A K 4

Plan the play – it's a teams' match.

Solution Teaser No. 32

West is unlikely to lead low from a holding headed by QJ against a suit contract. Normally, with AK4 in your hand it would be right to try the ten from dummy just in case, but on this occasion it is better to play low from dummy, as you will soon see. East plays the queen, so it looks as if the lead is from JXXX (or possibly JXX). In view of the spade overcall there is almost certainly a spade loser. West cannot hold KX or K singleton. There is an outside chance that East may have K singleton, though inferences from the bidding and lead make that very unlikely. There are two diamond losers as well so it looks as if trumps will have to break 2-2. Is there a way to succeed if trumps are 3-1, other than hoping for a miracle in spades? If West has three trumps it might be possible to throw him in to open up the spades, but again the evidence so far suggests East is more likely to hold the long trump holding. Anything better?

Well, this is what Sweden's Peter Fredin tried when he played the hand: he won at trick one with the ace and led his four of clubs at trick two. West, who started with J732, played low so the ten in dummy won the trick! One of the diamond losers disappeared on the king of clubs so the contract made even though there

was no escaping a loser in both trumps and spades (West held Q bare of trumps and K10983 of spades)

The beauty of this deceptive play is that there is no downside, it either wins or breaks even, and the remote technical chances described above are still intact. It is therefore the best thing to do. If it doesn't work in your favour a diamond loser still goes away and you still make the contract if trumps break.

So why did West duck? From his point of view partner is marked with the king of clubs so the jack and king are now equals. If this was the original layout of the suit it would be fatal to rise with the jack:

	105	
J732		KQ8
	A964	

Partner's king would be left bare and declarer would ruff a club, thereby establishing the nine as a winner. This would provide a parking place for one of dummy's losers.

Declarer had created a false impression by playing as he did and it was impossible to read him for AK4 of clubs.

Another way of looking at it is that you will never score a trick with the ten of clubs if you play it under your king or ace. If you lead a low card towards it you just might!

To think of this counter-intuitive tactic at the table whilst playing in tempo was remarkable. West, by the way, was none other than Jeff Meckstroth, so it worked against a world class opponent!