

Teaser No. 37

♠ K 5 2

♥ 10 4 2

♦ A 7 2

♣ A J 7 4

GAME All, Dealer: South

Contract: 4 ♥ by South

Lead: J ♦

E/W Silent

♠ A 4 3

♥ A 8 7 6 3

♦ K Q 3

♣ Q 2

Plan the play – it's a teams' match.

Solution Teaser No. 37

The black suits should play for four tricks and one loser, for if the club finesse loses a spade goes away on the third round of the suit. The only time you can score five tricks with no loser is when West was dealt a singleton king of clubs.

Assuming one black suit loser, success depends on losing just two trump tricks.

If the suit breaks 3-2 there is no danger of three losers. If it breaks 4-1 there is a glimmer of hope if East has the four card holding. You must start with the TEN from dummy, and should do so at trick two. This is the only technical chance as well as being the best psychological play. It gains by force if West's singleton is the nine for that card is pinned. East, with KQJ5, will only score two tricks regardless of whether or not they cover. If, instead, you start with a low card from dummy the defence must come to three tricks. Leading the ten is a no cost strategy and it also gains if East decides to cover with KQ95, KJ95 or QJ95, thereby crashing with the singleton honour opposite. It would be a defensive error to do so, but it does look tempting, especially with QJ95 as the cards form a straight sequence around the 10.

If the defence switch to spades when they take their first trump trick, win in hand and take the club finesse. Lead the queen of clubs to unblock the suit, giving up on the very slim chance of a singleton king in the West hand. If the finesse wins, revert to drawing trumps. If it loses, and a spade comes back, pitch your losing spade on the third round of clubs and then play on trumps.

As a defender, how do you know to play low with, for instance, QJ95 when the 10 is led from dummy?

Well, the reason you are tempted to cover is presumably because you don't want the 10 to score a cheap trick. If it were to, that would give declarer something like AK873. Ask yourself the question, 'How would declarer play if they really held that?' They would surely start with a top card, retaining the option of leading towards the ten on the second round. If an honour appears from either opponent they can then play safely for four tricks by leading a low card towards the ten. They could also hope for QJ doubleton and try for five tricks. Both of these options would not exist if the ten is squandered on the first round.

To emphasise the lesson, here is another example on the same theme:

1052

None

J986

AKQ743

Declarer does not expect to lose a trick as a 4-0 break only occurs one time in ten. If entries are not an issue it is again best to start with the 10 from dummy, but this time with absolutely no intention of running it if East plays low. A knee-jerk reaction may well tempt a cover! If East errs and plays the jack you can pick up the suit without loss (by leading twice more from dummy). East should realise that unless declarer has X-Ray vision the ten will not win this trick if they play a low card. If partner holds a higher card they will win the trick if declarer runs the ten. If partner does not hold a higher card declarer will surely overtake and win the trick in hand with a top card.