

Teaser No. 51

North

♠ A J 6
♥ K Q 3
♦ Q J 10 9 5 2
♣ 5

West

♠ Q 10 8 2
♥ J 10 9 8
♦ A K
♣ 8 7 3

Love All, Dealer: South

Contract: 3NT by South

Lead: J ♥

South opened 1NT(12-14) and North raised to game.

Declarer wins the first trick in dummy, partner playing the two, and then runs the Q ♦

You are sitting West - Plan the defence – it's a teams' match.

Solution Teaser No. 51

Switch to spades, specifically the TEN of spades.

Partner would surely have won the first trick if they held the ace of hearts so there is no future in that suit. To make up their minimum of twelve points, declarer must hold at least KQ in clubs, even if they also have the king of spades. So, there is no point switching to clubs. That would only succeed in the extremely unlikely event that declarer held KQ doubleton. The best chance by far is to play your partner for the king of spades. If they were dealt the NINE as well switching to a low spade is good enough, but if declarer holds that card care is needed.

You need to make what is known as a 'surround' play. The trick here is to lead the card immediately underneath the honour card (other than the ace) on your left, leaving yourself with two high cards that surround the significant high card on your right. On this occasion that means leading the TEN, the card immediately underneath the jack, leaving yourself with Q8 sitting over the nine.

'Surround' plays do require an effort of imagination as to what might be in the unseen hand, but apart from that they are not difficult.

This is the possible layout of the spade suit for which you must cater:

AJ6

Q1082

K73

954

If you make the mistake of playing the two (or eight), declarer will play low from dummy, forcing partner to waste their king on a low card. Note that this is their correct play for it wins if your spades are headed by either K10 or Q10 and only loses if they are headed by KQ.

Leading the queen also fails, unless declarer goes wrong. The ONLY card sure to work is the TEN. The tactic is to force out the jack, retaining Q8 over 95.

South held: ♠ 954, ♥ A64, ♦ 864, ♣ AKQ6

Here is another example, this time with the hand sitting over dummy on lead:

J43

765

AQ102

K98

If East is on lead and needs to score three tricks in the suit, the only good card to play is the queen. This is the honour card immediately underneath the honour card that declarer may hold. It retains the A10 as a tenace sitting over the jack. Provided that partner has an entry in another suit three tricks are assured. (If declarer declines to put the king on your queen they are in an even worse position as you will continue with a low card. Now you score three tricks in the suit regardless of which defender gains the lead!)

Leading the two or the ten, or ace and another, allows declarer to score two easy tricks.