

Teaser No. 61

North

♠ A 7

♥ Q 10 5

♦ A Q J 7 5 3

♣ 9 5

East

♠ 10 3

♥ J 7 4 3 2

♦ K 10 2

♣ A J 3

Game All, Dealer: South

Contract: 3NT by South

Lead: 4♣

South opened 1NT and North raised to game.

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

Solution Teaser No. 61

Play the JACK of clubs at trick one.

Partner rates to have a five-card club suit as they are marked with at least four spades and probably five. (South opened 1NT and there are only two spades in dummy) If they held better/longer spades than clubs they would lead a spade against this auction. As you can expect to score a trick with your king of diamonds, four club tricks will be enough to defeat the contract. Therefore, you don't mind if declarer scores one trick in the suit.

Returning to the play at trick one, when there are only low cards in dummy it is normal for third hand to play high. To play a card which is not your highest (or in sequence with your highest) is called 'finessing against partner'. This is generally a BAD thing to do, for it can allow declarer to score a trick to which they are not entitled.

Here the layout may be:

	9 5	
K 10 7 4 2		A J 3
	Q 8 6	

Playing the jack allows declarer to score a trick with the queen, whereas playing the ace allows the defence to take the first five tricks in clubs.

So, why is the jack the recommended play?

The layout may also be:

	9 5	
Q 10 7 4 2		A J 3
	K 8 6	

If you play the ace and lead back the jack (the normal thing to do) declarer has a routine hold-up play: they will take their king on the third round of the suit. When you regain the lead in diamonds you won't have a club to play.

If, instead, you play the jack, declarer will have to win the trick for fear of losing the first five tricks rather foolishly if the layout were:

	9 5	
A 10 7 4 2		Q J 3
	K 8 6	

So, play the jack at trick one and try to do so in tempo. If you think for ages declarer might smell a rat, for third hand rarely has a problem when the suit led has only small cards in dummy!

Declarer makes an overtrick with great ease if you part with the ace of clubs at trick one but will almost certainly go down if you don't.

Had your club holding been AQ3 instead of AJ3, finessing against partner would have been easier as there is no possible downside.

South held: ♠ KQJ4, ♥ A98, ♦ 986, ♣ K86