

Teaser No. 67

North

♠ A K J
♥ 5 2
♦ A K 2
♣ Q J 10 9 3

East

♠ 9 5 2
♥ K Q J 8 6
♦ 8 4 3
♣ K 2

Love All, Dealer: North

Contract: 3NT by South

Lead: 9♥

North opened 1♣, you overcalled 1♥ and South bid 1NT. North raised to game.

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

Solution Teaser No. 67

Play LOW at trick one.

The contract can only be defeated if partner holds the ace of clubs, so assume that they do. It must also be assumed that declarer will need to play on clubs, so they must have no way of scoring four diamond tricks. The lead is probably the top card from a doubleton, so declarer holds A10XX and will duck if you play the jack at trick one. Yes, you can continue playing the suit, but the link with partner is broken and the fifth heart in your hand is dead. The defence scores just two heart tricks. By playing low, you force declarer to win with the ten and, crucially, partner will be able to win the first round of clubs and play their remaining heart. The defence scores three heart tricks and two club tricks.

If the opening lead happened to be a singleton the contract is always making. Could it be from a trebleton though, in which case there is no need to concede a cheap trick? Not if you have agreed to play MUD leads as partner would lead the middle card from 9XX, and not if you play lowest from three small. If you favour 'top of nothing' leads it could be, but it is unlikely if partner also holds the essential ace: with three-card support for hearts plus the ace of clubs they would probably have raised you in the bidding.

Note that partner, with sight of dummy, can work out that the contract will only be defeated if you hold the guarded king of clubs. When declarer leads a low club from hand at trick two, they must disregard the possibility that rising with the ace might crash with a singleton king.

Take another look at Teaser No. 19. In that example it was declarer that needed to make the same counter-intuitive play. It is slightly easier when you can see the cards that partner holds!

KQJ54

This was the diamond holding and dummy held just one outside entry (the ace of clubs).

Needing three tricks from the suit, the winning play was to duck the first round. Playing a top card would have allowed East to counter by ducking with A10XX. It just goes to show that the mechanics of the game are the same for either side!

South held: ♠Q74, ♥A1073, ♦Q95, ♣864