

Teaser No. 71

North

♠ 9 5
♥ A Q J 10
♦ A Q 10
♣ K Q J 5

West

♠ K Q 10 7 6 4
♥ K 9
♦ J 9 6 2
♣ 2

Love All, Dealer: North

Contract: 3NT by South

Lead: K♠

North opened 1♣, South responded 1NT and you bid 2♠. North bid 3♠ (asking about a spade stop) and South bid 3NT.

At trick one, partner plays the three of spades and declarer the eight.

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

Solution Teaser No. 71

Switch to the nine of hearts.

This is not some random attempt at deception, it would be equally correct to switch to a low heart from K2. Only a very naive declarer would think that the lead of the nine said anything about where the king was sitting! The reason for leading the heart is that it is the ONLY card that gives declarer a losing option.

South is marked with precisely AJ8 in spades: the 1NT response denied a four-card suit and partner would have unblocked the jack if they held it. Continuing spades is therefore out of the question. The contract will be an easy make if declarer holds the ace of clubs, so assume that partner was dealt that card. This in turn makes declarer very likely to hold the king of diamonds. If you exit passively with a diamond, declarer will play on clubs before hearts. The worst that can happen from their point of view is that East wins and plays a spade. This establishes several winners in your hand, but declarer simply finesses hearts into the safe hand, not minding if it loses. (Note that playing on clubs first is correct technique, not a guess. With two possible high cards to knock out it is right to start by attacking the entry to the long spades. Declarer reasons that the king of hearts cannot be an entry but that the ace of clubs might be!)

The heart switch at trick two puts a spanner in the works. As the cards lie the contract makes easily if declarer decides to finesse. However, if your partner was dealt the king of hearts and you the ace of clubs, the winning line for declarer to win the first round of hearts with the ace and play on clubs.

To be clear, if the two key cards are in the same hand declarer always succeeds, but if they are split:

King of hearts with West, Ace of clubs with East: Winning line is to finesse

King of hearts with East, Ace of clubs with West: Winning line is to play the ace

This is pretty much a straight guess for declarer as you would overcall 2S with either key card in addition to your six-card spade suit.

So, assuming partner was dealt the ace of clubs, a heart switch gives you a 50% chance of defeating the contract, anything else 0%.

South held: ♠AJ8, ♥753, ♦K87, ♣10943