

MONDAY EVENING IMPROVERS

2/12/2024



Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul



♠ 4	♣ 3	♠ A K 9 8 6 2
♥ Q J 10 9 7		♥ A
♦ A K 10 2		♦ J 9 6
♣ A 10 7		♣ J 5 4



West	North	East	South
		1 ♠	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♦	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
3 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Try putting yourself in declarer's shoes, West, and have a go at planning this hand.

At first glance this looks a pretty solid contract. Using SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), I can count 6 top tricks and no immediate losers. Both hearts and diamonds look promising for the extra tricks required but does it matter which suit I tackle first? What possible threat is there to the contract? Even the lead has guaranteed a 2nd club stop by playing low in dummy to the first trick.

So, I take South's ♣K with the ♣A, unblock the hearts and take a diamond finesse while I'm in dummy ... oh no! North wins with the ♦Q, and

clears the clubs (South showing out on the 3rd round). I have won just 3 tricks and can only win 5 more (2 spades and 3 diamonds) before surrendering the lead. And yes, as is always the way, North has the ♥K and can cash 2 more clubs to set the contract.

My impression when watching the hand being played, was that declarer hadn't considered the threat that the lead of the ♣3 might be from a 5 card suit, and that losing the lead twice could lead to the establishment of those clubs for the defence. Better is to unblock the hearts as before, but then cross back to the ♦A and force out the ♥K. It doesn't matter what North does now, declarer cannot fail to make 10 tricks, 2 spades, 4 hearts, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs (11 if North makes the mistake of trying diamonds).

On the night, 2 Easts also declared in 3NT, presumably bidding 3NT instead of 3♠ (a bit risky with that club holding) and both went one off. In fact, East can also make 10 tricks and you might like to have a think how after the ♠Q lead.

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♥ Q J 10 9 7
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♣ A 10 7

♠ 3
♥ K 8 6 2
♦ Q 8 5
♣ Q 9 6 3 2



♠ A K 9 8 6 2
♥ A
♦ J 9 6
♣ J 5 4

♠ Q J 10 7 5
♥ 5 4 3
♦ 7 4 3
♣ K 8