

ACBL – BRIDGE HAND OF THE WEEK

Extra chances by Tim Bourke - Jan 30 2012

Dealer South Vul : E-W	NORTH ♠K 6 5 ♥A Q 8 5 2 ♦A 7 ♣Q 6 5	
WEST		EAST
	SOUTH ♠ A J 3 ♥ K J 10 9 3 ♦ 6 ♣ A J 8 4	

South	West	North	Easy
1 Heart	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 Diamond	Pass	3 Heart	Pass
4 Club	Pass	4 Diamond	Pass
5 Club	Pass	6 Heart	All Pass

After the Jacoby 2NT response (game-forcing heart raise), 3♦ indicated a shortage. This prompted some cuebidding on the way to slam. West leads the ♦J. What is your plan to make 12 tricks?

Solution

After taking the first trick with the ♦A and drawing trumps, you should play on clubs. In isolation, the optimal way to this is by finessing the jack. If it wins, the best line is to lead the ♠Q next. If the club finesse loses, the idea is to cash the queen and finesse the 8 if West produces the 9 or 10. However, that is not the best way to play the clubs on this deal because it takes the spades out of the equation!

If the club finesse wins, you should duck a club next, intending to cash the ace if the king of clubs does not appear. If West takes the ♠K, you should play the clubs from the top. If nothing good happens in clubs, you will fall back on the spade finesse if West guards the clubs and a squeeze if East has a club guard. The suggested play in clubs will produce three tricks around 55% of the time, giving close to a 78% chance of overall success.

This is fine, but a better plan is to play along elimination lines. After drawing trumps ending in dummy, you should ruff the ♦7 and lead a low club towards the queen. This will guarantee the contract when West holds the king! Suppose this is the full deal:

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

As the cards lie, West cannot rise with the king or he will give you three club tricks, allowing a spade discard from dummy. After dummy's ♠Q wins, you will lead a low club towards your hand, intending to finesse the eight and end-play West. When East produces the ♠10, you cover with the jack. Again, West is endplayed. He has three equally unpleasant options: concede a ruff and discard, lead into the spade tenace or into the ♠A 8, which will give you a spade discard from dummy.

If the ♠Q loses to the king, you can test the clubs by cashing the ace and jack, with the fallback position in spades as a last resort. This second approach gives an overall chance nearly one chance in 10 over playing on clubs directly, as first suggested.