

Bridge Hand of the Week

Circuitous route - Oct 18 2010

The following deal, presented many years ago by Steve Becker, is not very complicated – but there is an extremely amusing story attached to it.

♠ 8 7 4 2
♥ 6 3
♦ A K Q 5 2
♣ 7 6

♠ A 10 3
♥ A K 5 2
♦ 8 3
♣ A K 5 4

You play in 3NT on the lead of the ♠Q. The deal was presented by Becker to one of his classes. The point was to illustrate that the best chance for making nine tricks was to duck a diamond, playing for the suit to split no worse than 4-2.

In Becker's story, declarer won the opening club lead and played a low spade (!) from hand. Can you see a good ending?

Solution

Becker's narrative begins with the opening lead.

West, as expected, led the ♠Q. Declarer won, as expected, and then, unexpectedly, led a low spade from her hand. West allowed this to ride to East's queen, whereupon a second club was returned. South ducked this and the next club (!), blanking her ace and leaving West on lead.

Having scored two club tricks, West saw no reason to continue the suit, and so shifted to the ♠J. Declarer ducked this also, losing her fourth trick, and won the spade continuation with the ace. This was the position, with South needing the rest:

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

Declarer's next move was to cash the ♠A, discarding a diamond from dummy. This forced East to throw a heart in order to guard against dummy's diamonds. Now, for the first time, South focused her attention on the diamonds, cashing the ace, king and queen.

I don't have to tell you what this did to poor West, who had to keep the ♠K to protect against dummy's 8. After West discarded a heart on the third diamond, South crossed back to the ♥A, cashed the ♥K and scored the last trick with the ♥5, making the contract on a non-simultaneous double squeeze!

There are a lot of things a student can say after something like this. I've heard it all, so I knew what was coming.

"I made it," she beamed, "but I don't really think I should have. I think they gave it to me. My five of hearts should never have taken that last trick."

The full deal:

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