

NORTH
Dealer 16
EAST
SOUTH

Bath Replays

12 Double jeopardy

Board 16. Tuesday June 26, 2007

Imagine you're sitting North, and you pick up this minimum 1♥ opener. Partner's 2NT response shows good heart support and is forcing to game. You show your (ropey) diamond suit, and partner then cue-bids clubs. A lot of Norths, probably including me, would sign off in 4♥ at this point but you decide to cue-bid your ♠A. RKC Blackwood follows and the rather dodgy slam is reached. EW are silent until the end, when East doubles the final contract. Here's the full auction:

South	West	North	East
-	Pass	1♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
4♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♣	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Double
All pass			

♠ AQ6
♥ QJ952
♦ Q932
♣ 4

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♠ 43
♥ A876
♦ AJ864
♣ AK

East leads a club. How do you plan the play?

Your holdings in the two red suits are very similar - a nine-card fit in each missing K and 10 - and you need to bring home 5 tricks from at least one of them, which means (at the least) finding the K onside. So an attractive line would be to try them both in turn. Unfortunately, you need to be in your hand to start finessing, and you only have one sure entry. Without the double, it would be tempting to finesse the ♠Q, but if that loses you will have to bring home *both* red suits without further loss, and the double suggests that East has the ♠K.

At the table, declarer saw all that, but the line she adopted was just as risky. She crossed to her hand with ♠A, and led ♥Q. Of course, once the ♠A was gone, it was just as if she had already lost the spade finesse: both red suits had to come in, or the defenders would be able to cash their ♠K - whichever of them held it. And that is exactly what happened. East covered North's ♥Q with the King, and later came in with his ♥10 and cashed his ♠K for one down.

It's the double that gives the clue to the best approach. East hasn't got any aces, so for his double he's pretty likely to have at least K10x of trumps, as well as the other two outstanding kings. If that's the case, you're going to lose a trump trick anyway, and instead you have to hope for better things in diamonds.

So at trick 2, leaving spades well alone, you play ♥A, followed by a low heart to the Queen, letting East make his ♥K but leaving you with plenty of entries to finesse diamonds twice if necessary. Home and dry as the cards lie, with five tricks in diamonds, four in hearts, ♣AK and ♠A.

Which leaves the question of whether East was wise to double. Well, the winning play is probably the best line in any event, but without the double it's much more difficult for declarer to find. So East was pretty lucky to get his extra 50 points, given that his double could easily have led to a very nasty -1210 instead.

*Chris Jones with Pat Davies
July 2007*

♠ AQ6
♥ QJ952
♦ Q932
♣ 4

♠ J10852
♥ 4
♦ 75
♣ QJ876

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♠ K97
♥ K103
♦ K10
♣ 109532

♠ 43
♥ A876
♦ AJ864
♣ AK

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Postscript

We also got to 6 hearts on this deal, and my partner Wendy Simpson played a blinder.

A club had been led and after winning with the King, Wendy realised that there was no safe way of getting to her hand to take finesses. So at trick 2, she played ♣A and ruffed it! Then she took the heart finesse, East covering the Queen with the King, and learnt of the 3-1 trump break while returning to hand with the ♥J. Undaunted, she took the diamond finesse successfully and cleared the suit. Now the third spade in her hand could be ditched ultimately on the long diamond in dummy, but what about the ♠Q? At this point she exited with a heart, and East was endplayed. Either he had to lead into the Spade tenace or lead a club to give a ruff and discard.

Prabir Nandi

♠ AQ6 ♥ QJ952 ♦ Q932 ♣ 4	NORTH Dealer 16 EAST SOUTH	♠ K97 ♥ K103 ♦ K10 ♣ 109532
♠ J10852 ♥ 4 ♦ 75 ♣ QJ876		♠ 43 ♥ A876 ♦ AJ864 ♣ AK