

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

THE ART OF CONCEALMENT

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ T32 ♥ J43 ♦ AK62 ♣ AT9	
♠ K74 ♥ T982 ♦ QT5 ♣ 432	North West East Declarer	♠ AJ95 ♥ 765 ♦ 9843 ♣ K5
	♠ Q86 ♥ AKQ ♦ J7 ♣ QJ876	

South opens 1NT, which nowadays usually shows 15-17 HCP. North bids 3NT, and West leads the ♥T.

Declarer can see enough tricks once the ♣K is out of the way, but those Spades look somewhat fragile. We have two questions. Firstly, how do you play the Hearts? Secondly, how do you play the Clubs? These questions are not misprints, we'd really like to know!

Declarer can see that the opening Heart lead is from **T9xx** or some such holding. But, from East's seat, it might well be from holdings such as **AT9x** or **KT9x** or **QT9x**. How can Declarer muddy the waters and create some doubt in East's mind? She could routinely play low from Dummy, as most would, but the play most likely to cause confusion is surely the Jack! Declarer then wins the trick with the Ace, and East will say to himself: "I've seen this movie before. Declarer was hoping that I had the Queen and would cover. Clearly she is laying a false trail and has AK doubleton in the suit"

Now Declarer plays on Clubs. If she leads the ♣Q then that pretty much advertises the situation. So, instead, she runs the less informative Jack, and when East wins the King he'll have some thinking to do. Declarer has a maximum of three points in Diamonds, and appears to have seven points in Hearts. The Club situation won't be clear, and East might visualize Declarer's hand as: **♠KQx**, **♥AK**, **♦QTxx**, **♣J87x**, or something similar. If so then a Heart continuation beats the contract.

A less devious Declarer will play a low Heart from Dummy on Trick 1, and will run the ♣Q at Trick 2. When East wins his King, he'll have more clues, and is more likely to diagnose Declarer's Spade weakness. If he does, he will be sure to switch to the Spade *Jack*, a so-called "surrounding play" which allows the defense to grab four Spade tricks, setting the contract.

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