

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

THE ONLY CHANCE

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ 93 ♥ T98 ♦ AK92 ♣ 7652	
♠ JT7 ♥ J52 ♦ QT854 ♣ A4	<i>North</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Declarer</i>	♠ Q4 ♥ AQ7643 ♦ 7 ♣ KQJT
	♠ AK8652 ♥ K ♦ J63 ♣ 983	

Suppose that you are playing in a duplicate (matchpoint) event. Nobody is vulnerable and E-W bid up to 3♥. Now N-S compete with 3♠ and that gets doubled. Playing in Hearts, E-W would probably make 9 tricks, and that's -140 for N-S. But here N-S are in 3♠ doubled and will get a good result only if they can hold their losses to down one, scoring -100. Down two for -300 would be very bad indeed. How do you escape for down one?

Playing 3rd and 5th leads, West starts out with the Heart Two to the Ace, and East shifts to the ♣K. West overtakes with the Ace and the defense proceeds to play out all four rounds of Clubs. As Declarer, what do you play on the fourth round of Clubs? Remember, you have already lost four tricks and can lose only one more if you are to escape with a good board.

Ruffing the Club high cannot be right, that will ensure that the defense scores two trump tricks. Nor can it be right to pitch a Diamond, that is also a guaranteed down two. Perhaps surprisingly, the only chance is to ruff low. Your hope is that West has three trumps and that therefore, if he overruffs, it will be with a natural trump trick. So, that's what you do, West does overruff, the return of the ♥J is ruffed and trumps fall in two rounds.

So far, so good, but you still have to bring in the Diamonds for no losers if you are to accomplish your goal. Does somebody have the doubleton Queen? Not possible! The opening lead tells you that West started with three Hearts, and the play tells you that he also started with two Clubs and three Spades. That leaves five Diamonds with West and one with East. Therefore, the percentage play in Diamonds is to run the Jack (in case East has the singleton Ten). If West covers with the Queen you can finesse the Nine later. "Down one is good bridge" as they always say.

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