

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

COUNT UP TO TEN

By: Brian Gunnell

Both Vulnerable

<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

	♠ A752 ♥ KJ2 ♦ 62 ♣ 6532	
♠ QJT4 ♥ 654 ♦ A8 ♣ QT87	North West East Declarer	♠ K986 ♥ 97 ♦ KT973 ♣ 94
	♠ 3 ♥ AQT83 ♦ QJ54 ♣ AKJ	

Declarer can count eight top tricks and there are various ways by which she might attempt get that total up to ten. There's the Club finesse ... a Diamond trick or two ... a Diamond ruff or two. What is the best way of combining the chances after the ♠Q opening lead?

There is approximately 0% chance of getting two Diamond ruffs (if Declarer plays on Diamonds the defense will shift to trumps pronto) ... there is a 50% chance of the Club finesse working ... and there is approximately a 75% chance of East holding at least one of the top two Diamonds. So playing on Diamonds is clearly a better bet for the ninth trick than is taking the Club finesse. And the 10th trick? That can come from a Diamond ruff in the short hand (we've already counted Declarer's five trumps, so taking a couple of Spade ruffs won't add to the trick total). Declarer has a plan: set up a Diamond trick, and ruff a Diamond.

That's a very fine plan but Declarer will need to be careful with the timing. After winning the opening Spade lead in Dummy, it is essential to lead a Diamond at Trick 2 to Declarer's Queen and West's Ace. West predictably shifts to a trump. That is won in Dummy, and another Diamond is led, this time won by East. Back comes another trump, but Declarer is home. She wins that trump in hand, ruffs a Diamond, returns to hand with the ♣A, draws the last trump, and has her 10 tricks.

P.S. Let's go back to the point where East wins the second round of Diamonds. Suppose that East, instead of returning a trump, continues with a third round of Diamonds. In this case, Declarer will take care to play a *low* Diamond from hand (ruffing on the board), saving her Diamond winner for later, when trumps have been drawn.

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