

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

A PROFITABLE SACRIFICE

By: Brian Gunnell

None Vulnerable

	♠ Q43 ♥ A9754 ♦ ♣ QJ985	
♠ K95 ♥ Q86 ♦ AJ85 ♣ AK7	North West East Declarer	♠ AJ2 ♥ ♦ KQ6432 ♣ T432
	♠ T876 ♥ KJT32 ♦ T97 ♣ 6	

When this was dealt at a duplicate game, most E-W pairs missed their slam and played in 5♦, making 12 tricks and scoring +420. At three tables, South played in 5♥ doubled. The object of the exercise here was to make 9 tricks, which would be down two and -300. Could South escape for down two, or would it be down three and the dreaded -500?

At Table 1, West led the ♦A, ruffed on the board. Now a Heart to Declarer's King, East showing out. The bad trump break meant that Declarer could not ruff three Diamonds in Dummy and also pick up West's trump holding. That being so, the only way to avoid -500 was to set up some Club tricks. So, after winning the ♥K, Declarer led a Club which West won with the King. The defense cashed three Spades, and then a Diamond was ruffed on the board. A Club was ruffed (low), followed by a Heart to the Nine, another Club ruff (setting up the suit), then back to Dummy's ♥A to enjoy the Club winners. Down only two, for -300.

But West could have done better. After Declarer has taken the first Club ruff, the trump situation is:

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                ♥ A9
            ♥ Q8           ♥ --
                ♥ JT3
    
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At Table 2, when Declarer led the Heart Three, West was a star, majestically rising with the Queen! That blocks the Heart suit and means that it's no longer possible later to win the third round of trumps in Dummy. Very nice defense, indeed, and -500 for N-S.

At Table 3, Declarer anticipated that blocking problem and cleverly ruffed the first Club with her Jack. Now the trumps were:

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                ♥ A9
            ♥ Q8           ♥ --
                ♥ T32
    
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No blockage in this layout, so N-S escaped with -300 for a profitable sacrifice.

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