



21st May, 2008

DECLARE & DEFEND

Hands from today's Wednesday Game, one to test your declarer skills, the other your defense.

Defend ...

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | 1♦ | Pass | 1♥ |
| 1♠ | 2♦ | 2♠ | 3♦ |
| 3♣ | Pass | Pass | Dbl |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| | ♠ A42 ♥ T98752 ♦ 92 ♣ Q6 |
| ♠ QJ ♥ AQJ3 ♦ J7 ♣ JT732 | Board 9 Hands Rotated for Convenience |

As South, your final Double was somewhat speculative with only two Spades. But, Partner did open, you do have 12 HCP's, and the opponents are vulnerable. All in all it seems like a reasonable matchpoint gamble to go for the magic +200.

Partner leads the Heart Four, an obvious singleton. You win the Ace, Declarer predictably playing the Six. It may seem obvious to give Partner her ruff, but perhaps you should do some counting first.

What is North's distribution? South can count her Partner for probably 2 Spades (surely West has 6), which means that she is either 2=1=6=4 or 2=1=7=3. Where are Partner's high cards? Probably nothing in Spades, also nothing in Hearts. We doubt that Partner has AK♣ (most players would start with the A♣ in that case), and probably not AK♦ either.

So far, so good. Let's start by giving Partner 2=1=7=3, perhaps: ♠ xx, ♥ x, ♦ AQxxxxx, ♣ Axx. What happens if you give Partner her Heart ruff at Trick Two? Now the contract is cold! North cannot profitably attack Diamonds, and Declarer has enough entries with which to establish the Hearts and avoid two Diamond losers. No, the winning defense in this case is to deny Partner her ruff and switch to the J♦. This allows the defense to score 4 side-suit tricks plus a trump promotion on the third round of Diamonds. Down one!

Next, let's give Partner the 2=1=6=4 hand, such as: ♠ xx, ♥ x, ♦ AQxxxx, ♣ Axxx. If you give Partner her Heart ruff at Trick Two, you will also give Partner a chance to go wrong at Trick Three:

- If Partner plays on Diamonds that will be Declarer's 9th trick.
- If Partner cashes the A♣, then Declarer will unblock the King, and again has a chance to set up the Hearts (for example, if Declarer has the T♠ he can ruff a Heart with that, and if Declarer also has the all-important *Three* of Spades he can use that as a later entry to the board).
- If Partner finds the passive trump exit the contract will be down one.

In the circumstances, you would expect your esteemed Partner to get this one right but why give her a chance to go wrong? And, anyway, you need to shift to the Diamond at Trick Two in order to cater for the possibility that Partner is 2=1=7=3.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ T3 ♥ 4 ♦ AQT863 ♣ A854 | |
| ♠ K98765 ♥ K6 ♦ K54 ♣ K9 | | ♠ A42 ♥ T98752 ♦ 92 ♣ Q6 |
| | ♠ QJ ♥ AQJ3 ♦ J7 ♣ JT732 | |

On the actual lie of the cards you can give Partner her ruff, and, provided that she does not go wrong at Trick Three, the contract will be down one. But the Diamond shift at Trick Two is Partner-proof for down one, even if she is having a very bad day.

Declare ...

This week there was an abundance of throw-ins, squeezes, trump coups. Here's a couple of them.

Board 27

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ KT7 ♥ 54 ♦ 7642 ♣ A832 | |
| ♠ J9 ♥ AKJ8 ♦ JT3 ♣ QJ94 | | ♠ 632 ♥ Q7 ♦ AKQ9 ♣ T765 |
| | ♠ AQ854 ♥ T9632 ♦ 85 ♣ K | |

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| Pass | 1♣ | Pass | 1♦ |
| 1♠ | Pass | 2♠ | 3♣ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

Against 3♣, the defense plays Spades and Declarer ruffs the third round. Now the Q♣ loses to the King and South fiendishly persists with a 4th round of Spades. Declarer ruffs this with the Jack, and North declines to overruff and Dummy pitches a Diamond. Declarer plays the 9♣, won by North who gets out with a Diamond, won in Dummy. Here is the end-position:

| | | |
|----------|------------|----------|
| | ♠ | |
| | ♥ 54 | |
| | ♦ 76 | |
| | ♣ 83 | |
| Declarer | | Defender |
| ♠ | ♠ | |
| ♥ AKJ8 | ♥ Q7 | |
| ♦ JT | ♦ KQ | |
| ♣ | ♣ T7 | |
| | Immaterial | |

Now, North is about to fall victim to a Trump Coup. The Hearts are cashed and North's apparent trump trick vanishes in a puff of smoke, when, sooner or later, she must ruff in front of Dummy. South defended well when she played that 4th round of Spades, and Declarer's Trump Coup was a pretty counter.

Board 7

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ JT7 ♥ T ♦ KJ8764 ♣ J82 | |
| ♠ Q743 ♥ 975 ♦ Q5 ♣ AT53 | | ♠ 985 ♥ AKQ86 ♦ T2 ♣ K97 |
| | ♠ AK6 ♥ J432 ♦ A93 ♣ Q64 | |

| | | | |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
| 1♣ | Pass | 1♦ | 1♥ |
| 1NT | 2♥ | 3♦ | Pass |
| Pass | Pass | | |

Against 3♦, East leads the A♥, then K♥, which Declarer ruffs. At first glance it appears that, even with 2-2 trumps, Declarer is doomed to 5 losers, namely a Heart, 3 Clubs and the losing Spade finesse. Do you see any way to avoid that Spade finesse?

Yes, an elimination play saves a trick. At Trick Three, Declarer crosses to the A♦, ruffs another Heart, draws the second round of trumps, crosses to the A♠, and ruffs Dummy's last Heart, leaving:

| | | |
|----------|----------|----------|
| | ♠ JT | |
| | ♥ | |
| | ♦ J | |
| | ♣ J82 | |
| Declarer | | Defender |
| ♠ Q74 | ♠ 98 | |
| ♥ | ♥ Q | |
| ♦ | ♦ | |
| ♣ AT5 | ♣ K97 | |
| | Declarer | |
| | ♠ K6 | |
| | ♥ | |
| | ♦ 9 | |
| | ♣ Q64 | |

Now, instead of taking the Spade finesse, Declarer plays A♠ and out a Spade. Whichever defender wins will have the unpleasant choice of conceding a ruff and discard, or breaking the Club suit. Either way that will be 9 tricks for Declarer.