

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

DODGING AN UPPERCUT

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ 95 ♥ A63 ♦ K8 ♣ 876432	
♠ KT ♥ JT72 ♦ 642 ♣ AKQT	North West East Declarer	♠ Q432 ♥ Q5 ♦ QJT53 ♣ J9
	♠ AJ876 ♥ K984 ♦ A97 ♣ 5	

Both Vulnerable

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

After a particularly virulent outbreak of overbidding, one which afflicted all the combatants other than West, South found herself in the sickly contract of 3♠. The defense started with high Clubs, and Declarer ruffed the second round. How should she proceed?

With only four side-suit tricks, Declarer would need no fewer than five from the trump suit ... a Diamond ruff in Dummy would be one of them ... and hopefully three Club ruffs and the ♠A would make up the rest. Declarer made the key play of cashing the high Hearts next, a necessary step as otherwise, on the second Club ruff, East would be able to dump a Heart. With the Hearts safely cashed, Declarer crossed to the ♦K, ruffed another Club, cashed ♦A, ruffed a Diamond, ruffed a third Club, and had her 9 tricks.

That was good timing by Declarer, but East could have offered sterner resistance. Look what happens if East ruffs the fourth round of Clubs with his *Queen* (a so-called “uppercut”). Now, if Declarer overruffs with the Ace, that will be her eighth and final trick. Her last four cards will be ♠J8 and two Heart losers. She’ll exit with a Heart but East will alertly ruff his partner’s winner, and fire a trump through. Down one.

However, Declarer can dodge that uppercut by declining to over-ruff with the Ace. Instead, she pitches a Heart loser, and will come to nine tricks one way or another. If South is going to overbid like that then she needs to play them well.

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