

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

MAXIMUM DAMAGE

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ J96 ♥ Q876 ♦ A4 ♣ Q643	
♠ AT32 ♥ 5 ♦ JT962 ♣ JT9	North West East Declarer	♠ 875 ♥ A432 ♦ KQ83 ♣ 75
	♠ KQ4 ♥ KJT9 ♦ 75 ♣ AK82	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

The defense will score the ♠A, ♥A and a Diamond trick for sure, but the rest of the hand looks solid for Declarer. The only hope for the defense is that the 4-1 trump split will prove awkward for Declarer. How can East inflict maximum damage and set 4♥?

West's opening lead is the ♦J, won in Dummy. At this point the defense's strategy is to lead Diamonds at every opportunity, hoping that repeated ruffs by Declarer (or Dummy) will eventually set up a trump trick for East. At Trick 2, Declarer tackles trumps, and let's suppose that East grabs her Ace immediately, cashes a Diamond and continues the suit. Dummy ruffs that and plays a second round of trumps, getting the news of the 4-1 break. Now Declarer must delay drawing trumps while he knocks out the ♠A. When West is in he persists with Diamonds, again ruffed in Dummy. Now Declarer is home free, he simply crosses to hand with a Club, draws trumps and is left with nothing but black suit winners. Making 10 tricks.

East can do better than that. She must hold off with the Ace on the first round of trumps. And also on the second round! Now Declarer is done for. If he leads a third trump then East will finally take her Ace, after which repeated Diamond leads will set up a trump trick for East ... and if Declarer abandons trumps then East's small trump will score a Club ruff. Down one!

Nice defense by East, who will remember to say "Great opening lead, Partner!" The auction told West that Declarer was probably in a 4-4 fit and had a bad trump split in his future. So, West concluded that a forcing defense might be the best way to put Declarer's trump holding under pressure. Accordingly, he led his long Diamond suit, the only way to set the contract.

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