

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

IMPROVING THE ODDS

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ KJ ♥ AQ83 ♦ 872 ♣ AT93	
♠ Q9653 ♥ 742 ♦ J4 ♣ Q82	North West East Declarer	♠ AT74 ♥ J ♦ AQT93 ♣ J64
	♠ 82 ♥ KT965 ♦ K65 ♣ K75	

Both Vulnerable

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

E-W appear well-matched, because East bids most conservatively (he didn't open and he didn't compete to 3♣) whereas West seems to bid a lot (witness his 1♠ call).

The ♦J opening lead was taken by East's Ace, and the ♦Q played to Declarer's King. Trumps were drawn in three rounds, and with a Club and a Diamond still to be lost, Declarer concluded that a successful Spade guess was required to bring this one home. She'd just finished reading Lawrence's "Counting at Bridge", so she put her new-found technique to work. East had shown up with ♦AQ and ♥J, added to which he might also have a Club honor. With all that, *and* the ♠A, surely East would have opened the bidding instead of passing in first seat. So, with a high degree of confidence, she led a Spade to the King and East's surprising Ace. Down one.

It was unfortunate that Declarer's bedtime reading had not been "End-Plays for the Improving Player". In that case, after drawing trumps, she would have cashed the ♣K and led a Club to the Ten and East's Jack. East could cash the ♦T, but then had no safe exit ... a Spade return would spare Declarer the guess ... and a Club return would allow Declarer to pitch a Spade on the fourth round of Clubs. Making 9 tricks.

It's true that playing on Clubs was not a sure thing. West might have held ♣QJx, in which case he would split his honors and win the third round of the suit. Now West will lead a low Spade and Declarer can revert to her counting activities (without a happy ending, as it happens).

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