

# BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

## FIRST THINGS FIRST

By: Brian Gunnell

### *E-W Vulnerable*

|       |      |       |      |
|-------|------|-------|------|
| South | West | North | East |
|       |      | 3♦    | Pass |
| 3NT   | Pass | Pass  | Pass |

|                                   |                                     |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
|                                   | ♠ 7<br>♥ T743<br>♦ AKT9632<br>♣ 6   |                                   |
| ♠ QT843<br>♥ 2<br>♦ Q4<br>♣ A7432 | North<br>West      East<br>Declarer | ♠ A965<br>♥ J986<br>♦ 875<br>♣ 95 |
|                                   | ♠ KJ2<br>♥ AKQ5<br>♦ J<br>♣ KQJT8   |                                   |

Some players don't approve of preemptive bids when holding a 4-card major, pointing out that it risks missing (in this case) a 4-4 Heart fit. Others will say that North's so-called Heart suit is pitifully weak, and surely that long, strong minor needs to be bid.

On the actual deal, North's 3♦ preempt got N-S to a dubious 3NT when 4♥ was indeed a superior contract. Against 3NT, the opening lead was a Spade to East's Ace, then a Spade to Declarer's Jack and West's Queen, followed by a third Spade. On the second and third Spades, Dummy pitched a Club and a Diamond (a Heart could not be spared as the 4<sup>th</sup> Heart is a potential entry).

After winning the third Spade trick, how would *you* play the Diamond suit? Would you finesse against the Queen, or would you play for the drop? When the hand was played, our Declarer knew that with an 8-card fit, the Diamond finesse was the percentage play, so he successfully ran the Jack. That held, but the bad news was that Hearts were 4-1, so Dummy had no entry and the good Diamonds were stranded.

Declarer goofed. He should have cashed two high Hearts first ... if that suit split 3-2 then he could take the Diamond finesse, the most likely way to bring in the suit ... but when Hearts were 4-1, the lack of Dummy entries meant that he must rely on the singleton or doubleton ♦Q to make his contract. That would have been 10 tricks, just like those who declared the superior 4♥ contract. Does this deal settle the debate about preempting with a 4-card major? Not at all, it merely tells us that rotten contracts sometimes make, especially when played correctly.

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