

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

A TALE OF TWO SUITS

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ AQ ♥ A72 ♦ 9432 ♣ 6542	
♠ T8652 ♥ K6 ♦ A876 ♣ AJ	North West East Declarer	♠ 9743 ♥ 9543 ♦ Q ♣ T973
	♠ KJ ♥ QJT8 ♦ KJT5 ♣ KQ8	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
1NT	Pass	3NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Thanks in large part to the horrible Spade duplication (where ten HCP bring in two measly tricks), 3NT needs some luck. And, after the opening lead of the Spade Five, 3NT also requires careful play in Diamonds and Hearts. Can you make nine tricks?

Your best chance for nine tricks is to score four Hearts and three Diamonds. How do you play the Diamonds? Yes, you must take the tiny precaution of leading a *low* Diamond from the board. The trap to be avoided is running the Nine, that would be fatal in the actual case where East has the singleton Queen and where West's spots would prevent the suit from running. So, Dummy's ♠Q wins the opening lead, and a low Diamond is led, to the Queen, King and Ace.

West returns the Spade Two, again won on the board. You get back to hand with a Diamond (East pitching a Club), but refrain from cashing the two other Diamond winners, they may provide some useful back and forth later in the play. Instead, you lead the ♥Q, covered by the King and Ace. Back to hand with the ♥J, both defenders following, but neither dropping the all-important Nine.

Where is that Nine? You don't know for sure, so you will go with the odds. West's opening lead was the Five, and he later played the Two, so he appears to have started with a minimum of five Spades. West also started with four Diamonds, that's nine of his cards accounted for. By contrast, East started with a total of only five cards in those suits. Clearly, East has more room in her hand for Hearts, and the odds tell you to finesse against East for the Heart Nine rather than to play for the drop. So, you cash the Diamond Ten, cross to Dummy's carefully preserved Nine, and finesse the Heart Eight. Nine well-earned tricks!

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