

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

A SURPRISING DUCK

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ 8432 ♥ AJ43 ♦ J62 ♣ K2	
♠ KT76 ♥ 72 ♦ T9854 ♣ 63	North West East Declarer	♠ J9 ♥ T9865 ♦ 73 ♣ JT98
	♠ AQ5 ♥ KQ ♦ AKQ ♣ AQ754	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
2♣	Pass	2♦	Pass
3NT	Pass	6NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

South's 2♣ bid was artificial and strong, and North's 2♦ was also artificial, showing a hand without a suit worth bidding. Then common sense took over, and N-S blasted into 6NT. Can you make 12 tricks? Be warned, this one's not easy!

West led the Diamond Ten and Declarer could count 11 top tricks. Where was the 12th? One possibility was the Spade finesse but that was only a 50% proposition and Declarer knew that a 4-2 or 3-3 Club break was more likely. So Declarer's general plan was to unblock the ♥KQ, cross to the ♣K, cash Dummy's Heart winners (pitching Spades), and play on Clubs, hoping for a reasonable break in the suit.

But Declarer had neglected to think about the consequences of a bad *Heart* break. That's right, when Dummy's Heart winners were cashed the suit proved to be 5-2. Even worse, it turned out that the defender with the long Hearts also had the long Clubs. Declarer could set up his 12th trick alright, but the defense scored a Heart and a Club first. Down one!

We'll admit that Declarer was most unlucky with that line of play, it only failed because Hearts were 5-2, Clubs were not 3-3, *and* the long Hearts and long Clubs were in the same hand. But good players make their own luck and Declarer had a most surprising play at his disposal. Remember, he had won the opening Diamond lead, and unblocked the ♥KQ. Now at Trick 4 he ducks a Club! See the difference? Yes, the Club trick that he could afford to lose is now lost before Dummy's Hearts have been cashed (in other words, before East's long Heart has become a winner). That's a difficult play to find at the bridge table, did you find it at your breakfast table?

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