

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

TRUMP CONTROL

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ QT9 ♥ QT874 ♦ 9 ♣ A863	
♠ 7643 ♥ K65 ♦ QJT7 ♣ 74	North West East Declarer	♠ 85 ♥ AJ3 ♦ AK8652 ♣ 52
	♠ AKJ2 ♥ 92 ♦ 43 ♣ KQJT9	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
			1♦
2♣	2♦	3♣	3♦
3♣	Pass	4♠	Pass
Pass	Pass		

N-S stretch to reach 4♠ here. Even though it is a 4-3 fit, it's the only game with a chance of making. As is often the case with 4-3 fits, the success of the contract depends on trump control. Which side will prevail?

One (rather feeble) line of defense would be to play two rounds of Diamonds, forcing Dummy to ruff. But that gets the defense nowhere, Declarer simply draws trumps and runs the Clubs. That is 10 tricks, made up of nine black suit winners plus that Diamond ruff in the short hand.

Forcing Dummy to ruff a Diamond was not a good defensive strategy, for two reasons. Firstly, the ruff in the short hand added to Declarer's trick total, and secondly it did nothing to threaten Declarer's trump control. East missed his chance to defeat the contract, do you see it? That's right, after winning the opening Diamond lead, East must force *Declarer* to ruff. A ruff in the long hand does not add to Declarer's trick total, but it does threaten her trump control. So, at Trick 2, East shifts to a *low* Heart. West wins that and fires back another Heart. Then the third round of Hearts does in Declarer. Declarer must ruff that in her hand, but now has fewer trumps than West. Goodbye trump control, hello down one!

Declarer can count herself a little bit unlucky if she goes down on this deal. The defense had to find the right plan, *and* the ♥J had to be with East, *and* the E-W trumps had to be 4-2 (if they had been 3-3 then Declarer could have withstood the ruff in her hand).

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