

Tales of Akarana

Critical Choices



Challenging, frustrating, at times exhilarating. Could it be marriage about which we are talking? No! Partnership of another kind. Defence, of course!

Drawing inferences, looking for signals from partner. Knowing when to be disciplined or when to take risks. After many years of “love hate”, you still struggle to master it.

So, set the scene. You have just been “to hell and back” on a previous board. (Maybe you have not made the journey back yet!) It came down to the key moment.

You had a choice of three suits to play to beat the contract. Two were right and one was very wrong. A random selection with your eyes shut would have been more successful!



So, you are rewarded with the following a few minutes later.

♠ 108

♥ 643

♦ J943

♣ AKQ6

with the opponents bidding quickly but uncertainly to 4♠:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	Pass
1♠	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

The “uncertainty” came about the meaning of a vulnerable 3♠ bid from a passed hand. There was some talk that perhaps it contained a shortage though at trick one, that mattered little to you as the opening lead did not prove a challenge. There was no shortage.

Board 10	♠ 10 8
East Deals	♥ 6 4 3
Both Vul	♦ J 9 4 3
	♣ A K Q 6
	♠ Q 9 7 3
	♥ J 9 7
	♦ Q 7
	♣ 10 8 4 3



Your lead, ♣K, sought a count card from partner. His 7 is followed by declarer’s 9. For want of better inspiration, you continue with your ace with partner playing the 2 and declarer the jack. Partner has the club you cannot see.

It’s nice to know that there are two wrong suits and one right one and one which requires good play from declarer to succeed. Do you feel like shutting your eyes and making the choice? If you cannot get it right when the odds are 2 to 1 in your favour, what chance do you have when it is under 50%?

You have the feeling, created by a rather miserable dummy (miserable for declarer that is) that you should be defeating this contract. How?

My choice of a supposed “give nothing away” trump gave away lots:

Board 10		♠ 10 8	
East Deals		♥ 6 4 3	
Both Vul		♦ J 9 4 3	
		♣ A K Q 6	
♠ A J 6 5 2			♠ Q 9 7 3
♥ A Q 8 5			♥ J 9 7
♦ A 6			♦ Q 7
♣ J 9			♣ 10 8 4 3
		♠ K 4	
		♥ K 10 2	
		♦ K 10 8 5 2	
		♣ 7 5 2	
West	North	East	South
	<i>You</i>	<i>Dummy</i>	
		Pass	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	3 ♠	Pass
4 ♠	All pass		

Partner’s ♠K fell under the ace and a subsequent heart finesse gave West his contract. Had I played a third high club, West can ruff and give the defence a trick in either major, taking two more successful major suit finesses to make his contract.

A heart exit is immediately fatal if partner inserts the king on thin air. The winning play by declarer on a heart switch, if South simply covers dummy’s card, is for declarer to win in hand and exit a low heart. South can win but cannot prevent declarer getting to table with a third round of hearts for a successful trump finesse. The diamond loser will disappear on the ♥A.

To succeed, you have to chance that diamond suit. Let's face it. You have nothing to offer your partner in hearts. So, perhaps he can help you in diamonds. A low diamond could still be fatal but with the K10 where you wanted them, you are safe. Declarer will win and exit a diamond. It is easier if you let partner win this so that he can play a third club, trapping declarer in hand. Declarer must now lay down the ♠A and hope for singleton king.... down one.

Half of the North-South pairs failed to get four defensive tricks to West's spade contracts but most were defending a part-score. "Challenging"? Certainly. Frustrating too. No signal really to go on. Time perhaps to take a risk on the diamond suit as the apparent "give nothing away" trump switch gave away 11 imps on the night.

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