

The Glorious Dummy

Don't you love it when you struggle your way through the play of a hand, in vain, and return to the score-up to hear teammates say there was no lead to beat the contract? "Oh, it was played the other way up at our table." Wonderful.

It can be also a little annoying when partner tries for slam, puts down a glorious dummy and down you go in game.

It all happened on Board 31 this week at Akarana. Take a look.



Board 31											
South Deals	♠ A Q 7										
N-S Vul	♥ Q 6										
	♦ A K 9 7										
	♣ K 8 7 3										
♠ 4 3 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ J 10 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10 9 8 7		♥ K 2									
♦ Q 2		♦ J 8 6 5 4									
♣ Q J 6		♣ 9 2									
	♠ K 9 8										
	♥ A 5 4 3										
	♦ 10 3										
	♣ A 10 5 4										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
			1 NT								
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	2 NT								
Pass	3 NT	All pass									

Some tables saw 3NT played by North. There is not one suit lead, especially a heart, which will lose a declarer a minute's sleep. With 8 tricks on top, it is merely a question of ducking a round of clubs and then seeing if you can score an overtrick. The play would have been pretty quick.

However, some Souths, playing a weak no trump range would have noticed a couple of 10's along with their 11 high and may have started a ball rolling which they might have had cause to regret. 2♠ above was a range-finder with South having no problem with their next bid. North closed proceedings and sat back awaiting overtricks.

West's ♥J lead was not what South wanted to see. After the queen, the heart pips fell away rather rapidly. There would be no problem if West held the king or indeed if the suit broke 4-3. However, as you can see above, neither of these occurred on this deal. You can make 3NT quite easily by ducking

the first and then the second round of hearts (playing low from both hands at trick one) but you would feel rather foolish ducking the first round in both hands and see West emerge with the ♥K on the second round.

So, when the ♥Q is covered, duck but win the continuation. Any 4-3 break does not worry you. Your aim would be to lose a club trick to the hand which did not start with five hearts, probably East. So, lead a casual low club from hand...but the ♣Q emerges from West. No duck now. Win in dummy and play a second club, playing your ace. When West plays low, it seems logical that they started with ♣QJ6 and dearly wanted to win the lead. Indeed, the play of a third club now signals "good night" to the contract.

So, turn your attention elsewhere. Cash your three spade tricks finishing in hand and everyone follows. If West did hold five hearts, three spades and three clubs, we can tell they are not over-endowed with diamonds. So, place the ♦10 on the table. If West does not play the queen, declarer's worries are over. If they do cover (they should), then win, and exit ♦7. East can win and cash one spade before playing a diamond back into dummy's ♦A9. That's the ninth trick coming a very hard way.

All you can say to your partner is "please give me a better dummy next time, partner." And to the teammates who struggled to save overtricks after East led a low spade: "piece of cake, really". It's the type of deal we all come to Bridge for, isn't it? That depends if you were recording +600 or -100.

Richard Solomon