

TALES OF AKARANA

EIGHT PLUS ONE EQUALSEIGHT

Would you say that J862 opposite a void is a good enough hold for no-trumps? Your left hand opponent has bid the suit and their partner said it was OK to lead that suit if you chose to play the board in no trumps. So, when the following sequence occurred, you did not think it was a very good idea to go for the nine trick game.

West	North	East	South
	Pass	Pass	1♥
3♥	x	?	

As East, you held: ♠AJT9 ♥J862 ♦2 ♣J653

with your partner wanting you to provide a heart hold as a prelude to running off a lot of tricks in a minor, presumably diamonds. It looked like a low heart lead would go to a high honour and that the defence would run off five heart tricks before you could gain the lead. So, you did not bid 3NT. A couple of East-West pairs did try for the 9 trick game. Bobby Hamman would be proud of them!

Yet, North’s hearts were a little too good for their side: AQ10.

On the third round of the suit, as long as you did not insert the jack (correct if North held AQ109), the defence could not play any more hearts.

Yet, despite only three rounds of hearts being played:

despite South having no entry outside hearts with which to gain the lead...and

despite West, your partner, having 8 solid diamonds to go with your ♠A,

you still could only make 8 tricks in your no-trump contract. Take a look:

Board 21

North Deals	♠ 7 5 4 2	
N-S Vul	♥ A Q 10	
	♦ 4 3	
	♣ A 9 4 2	
♠ 8 3		♠ A J 10 9
♥ —		♥ J 8 6 2
♦ A K Q J 9 8 6 5		♦ 2
♣ K 8 7		♣ J 6 5 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K Q 6
♥ K 9 7 5 4 3
♦ 10 7
♣ Q 10

Any courageous/ foolhardy East who tried 3NT would very much like to skip the rule which says that all four players must contribute one card to each trick. East’s problem is that very lovely dummy. At trick one, you can discard a club, being rather sorrowful at the thought of copious rounds of hearts

soon to be played. You feel no better when the ♥Q is played at trick 2. Yet, you can elect to throw safely a spade from dummy.

You might find a glimmer of hope when North emerges with the ♥10. Yet, even if you elect to guess correctly and play low, your third discard becomes an insoluble problem. Clearly, you have to retain your remaining small club which gives you an unpleasant choice of a winning diamond or your remaining spade. The spade might be a better shot, especially if North elects to lead one at trick 4 but having taken three heart tricks at the start, if North exits a diamond, the defence can take two club tricks at the end...to reduce declarer to only 8 tricks when they started off with 9.

So, our East was correct after all about the fate of 3NT. He emerged with 3♠ over partner's 3♥ bid which West duly converted to 5♦ which needed a better lie of the defence's spades. This contract drifted off a couple of tricks. Meanwhile, both declarers in 3NT made...9 tricks! Maybe 8 + 1 does equal 9 after all!

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