

UNIVERSAL CONTRACT THOUGH NOT RESULT

Many argue that the bidding is by far the most important of the three parts of our game. Get that right and you will most of the time achieve a good result. Maybe it takes the exception to prove the rule but Board 18 from this week's play puts a good case for the importance of good declarer play. So, here are the hands most East players saw in 4♥ after the lead of the ♠Q.

Board 18

East Deals

N-S Vul

♠ A 7 5 2 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ A 10 7 ♣ A K 6		♠ 10 ♥ A K 6 5 3 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ 9 8 5 4	
---	---	---	--

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		2♥	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	All pass		

2♥ showed 5 hearts and a 4 card minor and after West enquired about their partner's hand, East showed a maximum with at least 4 clubs (3♥). West raised to game, pretty confident of its chances of success. What's your plan?

If North held the ♦K and trumps broke averagely favourably (3-2 but the queen in the 3 card suit), you would have 10 tricks, as long as you had just one club loser. Already, that is a lot of "ifs" and with the defence able to exit easily in spades and threaten declarer losing control of the deal even if trumps broke 3-2, life does not look as rosy from the East seat as the West players may have thought.

Many a declarer has failed in game while their partner contemplated slam. While the West hand is not strong enough to look for slam opposite a partner without opening values, they may not have foreseen their partner's difficulties. Only three out of 12 declarers made 4♥, others failing by one or two tricks.

The answer lies in a dummy reversal. Axxx opposite a singleton in hand is often a sign to attempt this line, especially where dummy has plenty of entries.

Ruff a spade at trick 2 and return to dummy with a club. Ruff a second spade and play a second club to dummy's other high honour. Now ruff the last spade and with the that suit breaking evenly, East crossed to the ♦A and had already 7 tricks with the top two hearts in hand, needing just one more in a red suit apart from the high hearts.

Board 18 ♠ K 8 4 3
 East Deals ♥ 9
 N-S Vul ♦ J 9 6 4
 ♣ Q J 7 2

♠ A 7 5 2 ♥ J 7 4 ♦ A 10 7 ♣ A K 6		♠ 10 ♥ A K 6 5 3 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ 9 8 5 4	♠ Q J 9 6 ♥ Q 10 8 2 ♦ K 8 5 ♣ 10 3
---	--	---	--

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		2 ♥	Pass
2 NT	Pass	3 ♥	Pass
4 ♥	All pass		

On the actual deal, East exited a club won by North. South had to throw a diamond with the defence only able to score one diamond trick before dummy's ♥J became a trick for declarer, either because South had previously played the queen on the fourth club or because South ruffed low (South was likely only to have 4 trumps left). Had East played for the ♦K to be with North and played a second round of diamonds after the ace, the defence could have taken three minor tricks before a fourth round of clubs would defeat the contract (♥Q).

Although the dummy reversal did not guarantee the contract's success, it was a line unlikely to fail when a more standard drawing of trumps or planning to ruff a club would have succeeded.

No easy contract but a fine result for the three declarers who brought it home. It was much easier sitting West!

Richard Solomon