

WHAT SEPARATES EXPERTS FROM THE REST OF US

This hand was provided by Harvey Bernstein of the KLTC Bridge Club in Australia. It is a great example of masterful deductive reasoning to solve one of the great questions in bridge: How am I going to defeat this contract.

East is declaring 4♥ and you are South with this hand. After lead the ♠K you see this dummy:

North																			
West			East																
♠763																			
♥Q853																			
♦52																			
♣AJ109																			
South																			
♠KQ854																			
♥K3																			
♦AQ83																			
♣74																			
<table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">West</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">North</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">East</td> <td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">South</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♣</td> <td style="text-align: center;">1♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Dbl</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> <td style="text-align: center;">2♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">Pass</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">4♥</td> <td style="text-align: center;">All Pass</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>				West	North	East	South			1♣	1♠	Dbl	Pass	2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass		
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4♥	All Pass																		

Your partner plays the ♠J under your ♠K, which is an encouraging signal: Either he has the ♠10 or he started with a singleton spade. East allows your ♠K to hold so you lead a low spade to partner's ♠9 which is won by the declarer's ♠A. What is your plan for taking four tricks?

This is where the expert puts his brain to use. He first counts the points around the table and estimates what his partner can have. East's bidding shows a maximum of 16 points and his partner has 7 points. You have 14 points, leaving your partner with about 3 points, one of which you've already seen. The odds are that the ♦K is sitting in declarer's hand and so you will need partner to lead the diamonds to you in order to take the ♦Q, your fourth trick. Could any of partner's remaining jacks come in handy? Can he hold the ♥J?

Actually, he can hold the ♥J. If declarer held that card, wouldn't he finesse the ♥J by leading from the dummy into his heart tenace? He didn't; he simply led the ♥A, willing to give up the ♥K. So access to partner's hand must come from his probable ♥J.

How many hearts does partner have? East must hold four hearts for his bid and therefore, partner has three hearts. Declarer's ♥A takes one of partner's trump; your ♥K takes a second trump and dummy's ♥Q takes his third and final trump. He will never get on lead with this play. Now comes the truly startling deduction. The expert South playing this hand ditched the ♥K under declarer's ♥A!

Now declarer ♥A takes partner's first trump; the dummy's ♥Q takes his second trump; and his ♥J is set up to win the third heart trick and allow him to lead a diamond through declarer's ♦K and give you a defeat worthy of a newspaper spread.

This is the complete board:

14	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ J109 ♥ J106 ♦ J10964 ♣ 83	X	P	1♣	1♠
W West		4♥	P	2♥	P
♠ 763 ♥ Q853 ♦ 52 ♣ AJ109	E East		P	P	P
	S South				
	♠ KQ854 ♥ K2 ♦ AQ83 ♣ 74				
		4♥ E		NS: 0	EW: 0

If you would like to see the whole hand played out, click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/qxbtntc> . Or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick.