

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

THE SCISSORS COUP

By: Brian Gunnell

This week's deal features the Scissors Coup, so-called because it cuts communications between the two defenders.

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| | ♠ J95 ♥ AKJ7 ♦ 43 ♣ AT87 | |
| ♠ A4 ♥ T ♦ AJT65 ♣ KQJ52 | North West East Declarer | ♠ 2 ♥ 8643 ♦ KQ987 ♣ 643 |
| | ♠ KQT8763 ♥ Q952 ♦ 2 ♣ 9 | |

Both Vulnerable

| West | North | East | South |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| 1♦ | Dbl | 4♦ | 4♠ |
| 5♦ | Pass | Pass | 5♠ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

East's 4♦ was preemptive, showing long Diamonds and not much else.

As West, what's your opening lead? It would be reasonable to lead ♣K, attempting to set up a Club trick while you still have the ♠A entry. That

doesn't work on the actual deal because of Declarer's Club singleton. A more promising plan might be to lead the singleton Heart, later winning the ♠A, then *underleading* the ♦A to East's hoped-for ♦K, and getting a Heart ruff for down one. As you can see, that plan is the winner. Well, not quite, because there is a clever counter-measure. How can Declarer deprive West of his ruff?

Enter the Scissors Coup. Declarer wins the Heart lead in Dummy, and before touching trumps she cashes ♣A and leads another Club, *pitching a Diamond* when East plays low. By this maneuver Declarer trades a Diamond loser for a Club loser, in the process thwarting West in his plan to reach East with the ♦K. Now, with the defensive communications snipped, Declarer loses only the ♠A and a Club (but there is no Diamond loser and no Heart ruff).

Post Script: As West you no doubt found that well-thought-out Heart opening lead. Then as Declarer you made a clever play to bring home the 5♠ contract. Next, imagine that you hold the East cards, but with the ♣6 replaced by the ♣J. Now, after Dummy's ♣A has been cashed, when a second Club is played, we are quite confident that you would alertly hop up with that ♣J, foiling the Scissors Coup. Nice play!

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