

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

THE CUSTOMARY RETORT

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ 32 ♥ Q832 ♦ AK52 ♣ K43	
♠ KQT97 ♥ 4 ♦ 98763 ♣ 75	North West East Declarer	♠ J8 ♥ 765 ♦ QJT4 ♣ QJT2
	♠ A654 ♥ AKJT9 ♦ ♣ A986	

E-W Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

After that bold leap to 6♥, West leads the ♠K. Declarer can count 10 top tricks (consisting of 5 trumps and 5 side-suit winners). Our question to you is “Where are the other two tricks coming from?”

Will it help Declarer’s cause to ruff two Diamonds? No, those ruffs are in the “long hand”. Declarer’s five trumps have already been included in the trick total, and using two of them for ruffing does not create two extra trump tricks. But getting a couple of ruffs in the “short hand”, well that is an entirely different kettle of fish. That’s right, Declarer can make his contract is by arranging two Spade ruffs in Dummy.

Getting those ruffs must be done early in the play. It won’t do to draw two rounds of trumps (hoping they are 2-2) and then to lose a Spade. In that case, East will win the Spade and fire back another trump, holding the Spade ruffs to just one. It’s OK to draw just one round of trumps, but then the Spade trick must be conceded. Now, whatever the defense does, Declarer gets those two ruffs in the short hand for a total of 12 tricks.

It was fortunate for Declarer that Dummy showed up with the ♥8! If you were to exchange Dummy’s ♥8 with East’s ♥7, then the slam fails (East can over-ruff one of the Spade tricks). When East curses his rotten luck in being dealt that inadequate ♥7, the customary retort is “But we would never have bid the slam without the ♥8”

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