

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

THIRD TIME LUCKY

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ 2 ♥ KQJT ♦ QT86 ♣ AQJ9	
♠ Q9874 ♥ 75 ♦ K94 ♣ 842	North West East Declarer	♠ KT63 ♥ A64 ♦ A532 ♣ T7
	♠ AJ5 ♥ 9832 ♦ J7 ♣ K653	

E-W Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
		1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

West led a Spade and Declarer saw an easy route to 10 tricks. He'd get two Spade ruffs in Dummy, added to which there would be three more trump tricks, the ♠A and four Clubs. Seems too easy, what's the catch?

The play went: ♠A, Spade ruff, cross to the ♣K, Spade ruff, Heart to East's Ace, Club won by Dummy, after which Dummy's last trump was cashed. "Oops!" said Declarer. There was still an enemy trump out, but Declarer could not get back to hand to draw it. Eventually he ran into a Club ruff and that was down one.

Could Declarer have brought home his game by drawing trumps immediately, planning for just one Spade ruff, with the Diamonds providing the 10th trick? Nope! The play goes: ♠A, ♥K is ducked by East (good play!), ♥A wins the next trick, Spade return is ruffed on the board. It's another "Oops!" Now the defense is a step ahead of Declarer, and will score a Spade trick before Declarer can set up his Diamond winner.

To avoid a third "Oops!" Declarer must go to work on the Diamonds at Trick 2. This subtle change in timing leaves the defense with no winning option, and now it is Declarer who is one step ahead of the game. The first chapter in books on card play invariably says "Draw the defenders' trumps before they start ruffing your winners", and then the remaining chapters are dedicated to explaining the numerous exceptions to this rule. Setting up side-suit tricks early is a common such exception.

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