

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

DECLARE OR DEFEND?

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ AKQJ ♥ A7432 ♦ ♣ K963	
♠ 65 ♥ KJT5 ♦ KJ9 ♣ AJT2	North West East Declarer	♠ 432 ♥ Q9 ♦ T876 ♣ 8754
	♠ T987 ♥ 86 ♦ AQ5432 ♣ Q	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
		1♥	Pass
1♠	Dbl	4♠	All Pass

South's hand was not good enough to bid her Diamonds at the two-level, so she responded 1♠ and soon found herself declaring a 4♠ contract.

You can see all four hands, it's time to place your bets. Do you want to declare or defend?

Declarer can count a trick in each side-suit, so one route to success would be to cross-ruff the hand, scoring those trumps separately. But not so fast! West cleverly finds the opening lead of a trump, and Declarer can be sure that the defense will lead another trump next time they get in. The second trump lead holds Declarer to only six trump tricks (♠A, ♠K, plus two ruffs in each hand) to go with the three side-suit tricks.

So 4♠ is down one? Not necessarily, it may be possible to set up a long Heart for the 10th trick, and the best way to do that is to lose a Heart at Trick Two. The defense returns another trump, and now Dummy's ♥A is cashed, then a Heart ruffed. Declarer's ♣Q is taken by West, who cannot lead another trump. He does best to exit with a Club, but Declarer wins that in Dummy, ruffs another Heart, cashes the ♦A, ruffs a Diamond, draws East's last trump, and scores Dummy's long Heart. Making 10 tricks!

West could have made Declarer's life more difficult by letting Declarer's ♣Q hold the trick! This surprising play leaves Dummy an entry short of being able to enjoy the long Heart. So, down one after all? No, of course not, if West finds that fine play then Declarer counters by overtaking with the Queen with the King! That provides the extra Dummy entry, and 4♠ does indeed make. Was that how you bet?

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