

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

LOUD AND CLEAR

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ T8 ♥ T854 ♦ T953 ♣ QJ5	
♠ 542 ♥ 3 ♦ AQJ742 ♣ 732	North West East Declarer	♠ 97 ♥ AJ962 ♦ K6 ♣ T864
	♠ AKQJ63 ♥ KQ7 ♦ 8 ♣ AK9	

E-W Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
2♣	2♦	Pass	Pass
4♠	All Pass		

2♣ was artificial and strong, and South wound up in 4♠. Looking at all four hands it is not difficult to see how E-W can defeat this contract, but how many E-W pairs would find the winning defense at the table?

On opening lead, West did not see much future in Diamonds, so he went after a ruff or two by leading his singleton Heart. East won her Ace and Declarer, being a shifty sort of fellow, dropped the King in an attempt to muddy the waters for the defense. That gave East pause for thought, as she wondered whether West had led from ♥Q73. Eventually East decided that Declarer's King was probably flim-flam, so she returned a Heart for West to ruff. But *which* Heart?

The winning defense after the ruff was, of course, for West to underlead his ♦A, getting East in to provide a second ruff. But how was West to know that East's entry was the ♦K and not the ♣A? The answer was in the Heart led back by East at Trick 2. A low Heart would say "Return a Club" (the lower-ranking suit), and a high Heart would say "Return a Diamond" (the higher-ranking suit, which is Diamonds as trumps are not part of this equation). A middling Heart would indicate no preference.

So, should East return the Heart Nine? No, the Nine might be ambiguous, better to hit Partner over the head with a signal which is as loud and clear as possible. That would be the Jack! West ruffs that and there is no mistaking East's intentions. The ♦A is underled to East's King, then a second ruff, and Declarer is down one.

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