

Hands from the Garden Cities Regional Final – 9th May 2015

Bath Bridge Club failed to qualify for the National Final of this event but there were some interesting hands.

This was a fascinating part score hand from the first session (Board 7):

| | | | |
|-----------|------------|-----------|--|
| Dir S | 9 8 | | |
| Game all | A 10 4 3 | | |
| | J 5 | | |
| | Q 10 8 6 2 | | |
| 3 2 | | K J 7 6 5 | |
| 8 | | J 9 5 2 | |
| A 9 7 6 2 | | Q 10 4 | |
| A K 9 7 5 | | 4 | |
| | A Q 10 4 | | |
| | K Q 7 6 | | |
| | K 8 3 | | |
| | J 3 | | |

South opens 1♥ and West overcalls 2NT. North supports to 3♥ and this finishes the auction. Pat and I play this as a non-constructive raise, 3♣ would show a constructive raise. West leads the A♠ and switches to a trump (best). It looks as if it will be hard to come to 9 tricks even with the spades so favourable but variations in the defence lead to fascinating possible endings.

Declarer can cover the 8♥ with the 10 in dummy which will enable trumps to be picked up with no loss but interestingly this is the only way to go down in the contract! The reason is that two trump entries will be required to establish and enjoy the threat of the established club tricks which leads to interesting endplay opportunities.

At trick 2 declarer plays a low heart and wins with the Q♥ in hand and then leads the J♣. West does best to let his partner ruff this and exit with a trump. Winning in dummy, declarer can now finesse a spade (no need for the deep finesse) and cash the A♠ to eliminate West's spades. Now it would be premature to ruff a spade in dummy – this is an entry needed for later! Best is to cross to the other top trump in dummy (drawing trumps) and lead the Q♣ discarding a spade from hand. West cannot win this as he would be endplayed to lead into dummy's 10 8 of clubs or away from the A♦. Now declarer can succeed by ruffing a club, ruffing the last spade in dummy and throwing West in with the A♣ to concede a diamond trick.

East could play back a spade after ruffing the club at trick 3. Now declarer can also succeed by winning the Q♠ and the A♠ and ruffing a spade in dummy. When he now plays the Q♣ from dummy, East can ruff with the 9♥. Declarer overruffs and ruffs the 4th spade in dummy and plays another club. If East ruffs this (high) he is now endplayed to lead away from the Q♦ or concede a ruff and discard. If he refuses to ruff, declarer ruffs in hand, draws the trump and exits with a club to West who is endplayed as before.

Board 5 in the second session featured one of the most powerful two suited hands.

| | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| Dir N | K 7 5 | | |
| NS Vul | Q 9 5 4 3 | | |
| | 7 3 2 | | |
| | 9 4 | | |
| None | | Q 9 6 4 | |
| A K J 10 7 2 | | 6 | |
| A K 10 6 5 4 | | Q 8 | |
| 7 | | J 10 8 6 5 2 | |
| | A J 10 8 3 2 | | |
| | 8 | | |
| | J 9 | | |
| | A K Q 3 | | |

South opens 1♠ in 3rd seat and West makes a two suited overcall. At two tables, the bid made was 3♣ (Ghestem). North passed and the Easts – fearing the worst – decided to pass! West was most unhappy!

It seems incredible that West cannot make a contract of 4♥ but such is the power of a forcing defence, as long as North leads a black suit declarer has to let North make 3 trump tricks or else he will lose control completely. 5♦ is the only makeable game contract – and even that has to be played very carefully!

How about game for South in 4♠? This looks impossible as declarer is bound to lose 3 red suit top tricks and cannot possibly pick up the trumps. But appearances are deceptive. Say West starts by cashing one top heart followed by AK of diamonds. It seems safe enough to exit passively with a winning diamond because with only one entry in dummy, declarer cannot take two trump finesses and shorten his trumps one more time to effect a trump coup. But, watch and wonder at what will happen.

Declarer cashes two top clubs and ruffs a club in dummy. Now a heart ruff is followed by another club ruff. We are down to this position:

| | | | |
|--------|--------|---------|--|
| Dir N | K | | |
| NS Vul | Q 9 5 | | |
| | None | | |
| | None | | |
| None | | Q 9 6 4 | |
| K J | | None | |
| 6 5 | | None | |
| None | | None | |
| | A J 10 | | |
| | None | | |
| | None | | |
| | Q | | |

Declarer ruffs a heart with the 10♠ and just cross ruffs the last three tricks picking up East's Q♠ by means of a trump coup at trick 12. – Nice!

Chris Dixon
May 2015