

362. Duck tape

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

		East	
		♠ 762	
		♥ 10864	
		♦ 1093	
		♣ KQ5	
South			
♠ 83			
♥ K95			
♦ AKJ5			
♣ 9842			
West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	2♠	4♥
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

West leads the ♦A, ♦K. South ruffs and plays the ♥J. What would you do as West?

The deal comes from a high-stakes rubber bridge game. Sitting South was William Zhang and he pulled off a very pretty coup here when faced with this problem, which was posed in yesterday's daily column:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

		North	
		♠ 762	
		♥ 10864	
		♦ 1093	
		♣ KQ5	
		South	
		♠ A94	
		♥ AQJ732	
		♦ 8	
		♣ A76	
West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	2♥	2♠	4♥
Dble	Pass	Pass	Pass

West leads the ♦A, ♦K. Plan the play.

The general approach would be to cross to dummy with a club and play a heart. If East plays low, you finesse the ♥Q. This wins if East began with the ♥K, ♥K-x or ♥K-x-x (return to dummy and finesse again).

Zhang looked more deeply into the situation. East figured to have 5 spades for the 2♠ overcall. That left West with 2 spades. If East had ♥K-x or ♥K-x-x, West would have 10 or 11 cards in the minors. With such a holding, including the ♦A-K already seen, West would have almost surely taken some action over 1♥. It was far more likely that West had a balanced or semi-balanced hand.

Zhang thought a psychological play was a much better chance for success. At trick 2, he played the ♥J from hand. That brings us to today's problem. What should West do? It would look very silly to rise with the ♥K and have it collide with East's ♥A or to have it crush East's ♥Q. West thought it was safe to duck. It wasn't.

This was the full deal:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

	North	
	♠ 762	
	♥ 10864	
	♦ 1093	
	♣ KQ5	
West		East
♠ 83		♠ KQJ105
♥ K95		♥ --
♦ AKJ5		♦ Q7642
♣ 9842		♣ J103
	South	
	♠ A94	
	♥ AQJ732	
	♦ 8	
	♣ A76	

After ♦A, ♦K ruffed and the ♥J winning, East discarding a diamond, South played a low spade from both hands. East won with the ♠10 and continued with the ♠K. South won, cashed the ♥A, crossed to the ♣K and ruffed dummy's last diamond. Then came ♣A, ♣Q, leaving these cards:

	North	
	♠ 7	
	♥ 108	
	♦	
	♣	
West		East
♠		♠ QJ
♥ K		♥
♦ J		♦ Q
♣ 8		♣
	South	
	♠ 9	
	♥ Q7	
	♦	
	♣	

When South played a heart, West won and had to play a minor. That gave South a ruff and sluff and away went South's spade loser. Very nicely done, Mr. Zhang, not only for the deceptive ♥J, but also for the fine elimination technique thereafter.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

North

♠ J84

♥ 64

♦ K73

♣ AJ1076

South

♠ AQ103

♥ A92

♦ A8654

♣ K

West	North	East	South
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			1♦
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Pass	1NT	Pass	2♠
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Pass	4♦ ⁽¹⁾	Pass	5♦
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Pass	Pass	Pass	
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(1) Too strong for just 3♦

West leads the ♥K. You take the ♥A and play the ♦4: queen – king – three. Plan the play.

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

I understood the meaning of 'hard core' when I tried to eat a frozen apple.