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 | 27 | 2♠ | 4♥ | | |
| Dble | Pass | Pass | Pass | | |
| 2010 | 1 400 | 1 400 | 1 400 | | |

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 27 2♠ **4**♥ Pass Dble Pass Pass Pass

West leads the A, K. Plan the play.

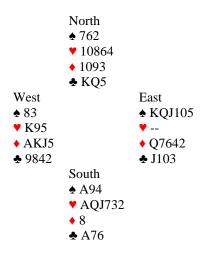
The general approach would be to cross to dummy with a club and play a heart. If East plays low, you finesse the $\mathbf{V}Q$. This wins if East began with the $\mathbf{V}K$, $\mathbf{V}K$ -x or $\mathbf{V}K$ -x-x (return to dummy and finesse again).

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

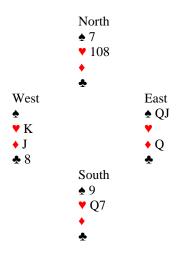
Zhang thought a psychological play was a much better chance for success. At trick 2, he played the $\forall J$ from hand. That brings us to today's problem. What should West do? It would look very silly to rise with the $\forall K$ and have it collide with East's $\forall A$ or to have it crush East's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

This was the full deal:

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable



After A, K ruffed and the $\forall J$ 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 $\forall A$, crossed to the K and ruffed dummy's last diamond. Then came A, Q, leaving these cards:



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 $\forall J$, but also for the fine elimination technique thereafter.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer South : Both vulnerable

| North ▲ J84 ♥ 64 ◆ K73 ▲ AJ1 | 076 | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------|-------------|--|
| South ▲ AQ1 ♥ A92 ♦ A860 ♣ K | | | | |
| West | North | East | South 1♦ | |
| Pass | 1NT | Pass | 2♠ | |
| Pass | 4♦ ⁽¹⁾ | Pass | 5• | |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | | |
| (1) Too strong for just $3 \blacklozenge$ | | | | |

West leads the \forall K. You take the \forall 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.