

368. Card Play Technique

By Ron Klinger

Dealer South : Nil vulnerable

North
♠ 974
♥ AJ72
♦ QJ1086
♣ 9

South
♠ AQ83
♥ K5
♦ AK742
♣ 86

West	North	East	South
			1♣ ⁽¹⁾
1♥	2♣ ⁽²⁾	Dble ⁽³⁾	3♦
Pass	5♦	All Pass	

(1) Artificial, strong

(2) Shows 5+ diamonds

(3) Shows clubs

West leads the ♥4: jack – six – five. Plan the play. Diamonds are 2-1.

You have a club loser and the fate of the hand seems to hang on the location of the spade honours. After drawing trumps, the normal way to play the spades is to finesse the ♠8 first (in case East began with J-10-x). If the ♠8 loses to the ten or jack, you return to dummy and finesse the ♠Q later. This line would fail if West began with ♠K-10-x or ♠K-J-x or similar. After the ♥J won trick 1, Nick Hughes of Sydney showed that 11 tricks were there regardless of the location of the spade honours.

This was the full deal:

	North	
	♠ 974	
	♥ AJ72	
	♦ QJ1086	
	♣ 9	
West		East
♠ KJ		♠ 10652
♥ Q10843		♥ 96
♦ 3		♦ 95
♣ AJ1073		♣ KQ542
	South	
	♠ AQ83	
	♥ K5	
	♦ AK742	
	♣ 86	

After winning with the ♥J, Hughes continued with ♦A, ♦Q, ♥K, ♦4 to ♦J. This was the position:

	North	
	♠ 974	
	♥ A7	
	♦ 108	
	♣ 9	
West		East
♠ KJ		♠ 10652
♥ Q10		♥
♦		♦
♣ AJ107		♣ KQ54
	South	
	♠ AQ83	
	♥	
	♦ K7	
	♣ 86	

He now made the key play of the ♥A and discarded a club. Next came the ♥7, ruffed. With hearts eliminated, Hughes now eliminated the clubs by exiting with the ♣8. This guaranteed that South would lose at most one spade. If West won and played another club, dummy could discard a spade and South would ruff. South would lose only one spade trick. If East won and played a spade, South would play low. West would win but whether West returned a spade or gave South a ruff-and-sluff for a spade discard from North, South had the rest.

It would not help East to shift to the ♠10: South would cover with the ♠Q. West would win, but would again be endplayed to give declarer the rest.

The deal arose in the Matchpoint Swiss Pairs, held by the NSW Bridge Association. Making 5♦ for +400 gave North-South a 95% score. Top board went to 3NT by North, making ten tricks for +430, after East led a top club and switched to the ♥9 at trick 2.

There were five other pairs in 5♦, once by North on the ♥9 lead and four times by South on a low heart lead. They all went one down, -50 and 18%. They all basically relied on bringing in the spades for only one loser and most finessed the ♠Q on the first round of spades.

Where South was declarer and West began with a low heart, none of these Souths played the free-finesse ♥J at trick 1. At one table, South won trick 1 with the ♥K, played ♦Q and ♦A and then finessed the ♥J. It won . . . phew . . . but the ♥J was so much safer at trick 1. South then slipped by pitching a spade on the ♥A instead of a club and meandered to one light.

The winners of the event were Paul Dalley – Tony Nunn, with Pauline Gumby – Warren Lazer second and Liz Adams – Andrew Peake third.

Problem for Tomorrow:

You are the dealer, with both sides vulnerable. What would you do with:

♠ Q10976432
 ♥ --
 ♦ KQ1085
 ♣ --

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

Double negatives are a no-no in English.