

TURKISH DELIGHT

	♠ A Q 5		
	♥ K 8 7		
	♦ A K		
	♣ 9 8 6 4 2		
♠ void		♠ K 8 2	
♥ Q J 10 3 2		♥ A 9 5 4	
♦ Q 7 5 4 2		♦ J 10 8 6	
♣ K 5 3		♣ Q 7	
	♠ J 10 9 7 6 4 3		
	♥ 6		
	♦ 9 3		
	♣ A J 10		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
Pass	4♠	All Pass	3♠

This hand comes from the World Championships in Istanbul in 2004.

West's lead was commonly the ♥Q. The Guadeloupe declarer covered the Queen with the King, East winning the Ace. The Italian East now found a stunning switch – the ♣Q – and declarer could no longer make the contract. If he ducked the ♣Q, he had 2 club losers. If he won the ♣Q, when East won the ♠K, he could lead across to his partner's ♣K, defeating the contract with a club ruff.

Declarer's error was covering the ♥Q at trick 1. He was happy to have a heart continuation, whereas the club switch proved fatal.

Giorgio Duboin, from the victorious Italian team, did duck the heart at trick 1, and ruffed the heart continuation. He led a spade, winning the Ace when West showed out, and exiting with a spade. In due course, he drew the last trump, then used dummy's diamond entries to double finesse the clubs. When the club honours were split, his contract was safe.

The Bulletin Editors wrote this up as a well-played hand so, in due course, I put in my two bob's worth. This resulted in an article, written by Ron Klinger, titled "Outplaying a world champion". If only I could be more consistent at finding "brilliant" plays.

The problem with Duboin's line was that, if the ♣K-Q-x had been offside, he would have gone down, although, admittedly, a double finesse is a 75% line.

Here is my 'far superior line', missed by the Editors (and Duboin, the world champion).

I ducked the ♥Q lead and ruffed the second heart lead with the ♠9. Trying to allow for the ♠K to be with East and both club honours potentially being offside (West), I chose to eliminate the red suits before leading trumps. At trick 3, I led a diamond to dummy's ♦K, cashed the ♦A, then ruffed dummy's last heart.

Now I led the ♠J, planning to finesse (and then the ♠A-Q would have been the two entries for the double club finesse). When West showed out, I stopped and recalculated. Having worked out the options, I now played the Queen from dummy. When East won the King, she could either return a spade to dummy (which would provide me with a second entry to dummy), or lead a club.

Assuming a spade was returned, I could win in dummy, then lead a club myself, finessing. When West won the King, she would be end-played – leading a club would pick up the suit for me, and leading a red card would allow me to trump in dummy, discarding a club from hand.

If, instead, a club was returned, I could either win the Queen with my Ace, or duck a small club to West's King, which would result in the same end-play on West.

I specifically played the ♠Q, because it meant that I would have a trump left in dummy, even after a spade return. Also, if East had ducked the ♠Q, I could lead the club myself, finessing, and again end-playing West. If I had won the ♠A, then exited with a spade, a spade return from East would clear North's last trump, and I'd have failed if both club honours were off-side (because now West could exit with a red card).

Try the hand for yourself, given this layout:

♠ A Q 5	
♥ K 8 7	
♦ A K	
♣ 9 8 6 4 2	
♠ void	♠ K 8 2
♥ Q J 10 3 2	♥ A 9 5 4
♦ Q 7 5 4 2	♦ J 10 8 6
♣ K Q 3	♣ 7 5
♠ J 10 9 7 6 4 3	
♥ 6	
♦ 9 3	
♣ A J 10	

Here's a hand with a different declarer play issue:

You have to make 3NT from the South seat, after a "3rd and 5th highest" ♣2 lead, and East playing ♣8 under dummy's Ace.

(3rds and 5ths mean that with an odd number of cards you lead your lowest card – 3rd, or 5th, or even 7th. With an even number of cards you lead your 3rd highest. Actually, it is a better method than 4th highest leads, because you often can work out the length in partner's hand more quickly. Another story!)

♠ 9 4		
♥ Q 4 3 2		
♦ A 8 6 4 3 2		
♣ A		
♠ Q 7		♠ J 10 5 3 2
♥ K J 8 6		♥ 10 9
♦ J 9		♦ Q 7 5
♣ K J 7 4 2		♣ 10 8 3
♠ A K 8 6		
♥ A 7 5		
♦ K 10		
♣ Q 9 6 5		

The lead (being the ♣2) meant that West held five clubs. Recognising this sort of information is vital to the play of many hands. I didn't want East to be able to lead clubs through my hand, so I immediately led a diamond to the ♦10 and West's Jack.

I knew I had no quick entry to dummy, but even if I'd led the ♦A, ♦K then another, I had the same problem. So, I needed the ♥K with West, and I also needed diamonds to break. Furthermore, I hoped that West didn't continue with clubs (hence the need to keep East from the lead).

West exited with a small heart, which I had to win with my Ace, to keep my entry to dummy. Next I unblocked the ♦K and led a small heart towards dummy's Queen. When West played low smoothly, I had to play the ♥Q and hope. When that worked, I had 10 tricks.

After the event, there was much discussion about how you can still make the contract if West continues clubs at trick 3. The solution was a double dummy play, though reasonable. Win the ♣Q, cash the ♦K, then cash the ♠A and ♠K (hoping for West to have a doubleton spade). You can then exit with a club, letting West cash his three club tricks (or however many remain), before she has to lead from the ♥K, giving you the entry to dummy without conceding five tricks.

I'm glad I didn't have to find that end-play!

But, once again, what started life as a horrid-looking contract, having lost dummy's re-entry at trick 1, became playable with a little forward-planning.

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