

CAREFUL MANAGEMENT

Before we look at the hands, let's have the auction:

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	1♥	2♦	2♥
3♥	4♥	Pass	Pass
Double	All Pass		

♠ A K
♥ Q 10 8 7 6 4
♦ 10
♣ A Q J 7

♠ 9 7 6 5 2
♥ K J 9
♦ J 9 8
♣ 10 4

East leads the ♦A, which you ruff. Are you wondering how West, a passed hand, has found a reason to double your contract?

I would be thinking that he has all the trumps – and probably all the values outside diamonds (since East appears to hold the ♦A-K for his lead).

You lead a small heart towards dummy, East showing out and West winning the ♥A to lead a second diamond, reducing your trump control of the hand. Your trumps are now the same length as West's. Rather than drawing two more trumps, which could cause problems if the club finesse fails, you should cross to dummy with a heart to take the club finesse now.

If the club finesse fails, dummy still has a trump, so you cannot be forced out of control on the hand. You can discard on a third diamond lead, then trump any further diamond in dummy, maintaining your trump control.

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

Once the club finesse works, you can trump your club loser, cross to hand with a top spade, then draw the last trumps, making 11 tricks.

The next hand involves careful defensive management, i.e. not end-playing yourself.

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♥	Pass	3♥ (weak)
4♠	All Pass		

North led the ♥K, won by the Ace. Declarer had a dilemma in terms of choices of play and how to use his entry to dummy. He could play for North to hold a doubleton honour in spades (lead small towards dummy, then finesse next time around), or for South to hold doubleton honour in spades (cross to dummy with the ♣K and finesse a spade, then the honour will drop next time around), or for the diamond finesse to work. So many options existed but he held only one sure entry to dummy (the ♣K).

He decided to lead the ♠8 from hand at trick 2, which ran to South's ♠Q. Holding five hearts, South knew that continuing with a heart was a pointless exercise, so opted to lead the ♦7, hoping to help partner to avoid any endplays before the clubs (potentially) ran. North won the ♦Q with the King and continued with the ♥K, ruffed.

Declarer now cashed his ♠A and realised he had chosen the wrong line when everybody followed small. He needed some sort of miracle in clubs now. Hoping for a defensive error, he led his top diamonds. North trumped the third round but was now in trouble. He had endplayed himself, with this being the end-position:

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

If North led a heart, declarer could trump in dummy and discard his small club. If North led clubs, he picked up the club suit for declarer.

What should North have done? He should NOT have trumped the diamond winner (nor the next diamond winner). Declarer was not able to discard 'profitably', which is when you need to trump in quickly. North only wanted to win his ♠K when dummy held no more trumps, which would allow him to exit in hearts, and declarer would then have a club loser.

Having had that explained to him, North excelled on a subsequent hand, proudly saying, "I didn't endplay myself that time!" Here's the hand.

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♣	Pass	1♥	2♠
Double (1)	3♠ (2)	4♥	All Pass

- (1) 3 card heart support (support double)
- (2) Aggro (see later – partner is a Youth player)

I was sitting South (the last two hands) and chose to make a weak jump overcall, given the auction (partner didn't have a double or overcall of 1♣). The hand itself had no defence, plus a 6-3-2-2 hand shape is the worst shape you can have with a 6-card suit (as with 7-2-2-2 hands).

Having led the ♠A and ♠K, ruffed, there proved an unexpected benefit from my weak jump. East believed that I had ♠A-K-Q and nothing else! He crossed to dummy with the ♦Q and led a heart. The 'text-book' play is to play for North to hold honour-10-x with these holdings, but East decided I couldn't hold a heart honour, so he inserted his Jack, my Queen winning (and now we had two heart tricks too).

I considered switching to a club, but J-x is always risky – often helping declarer more than the defence. Therefore, I just exited with a diamond. Declarer now cashed the ♥A, leaving North with a heart winner. He now led winning diamonds. This time, having learnt from the earlier hand, partner refrained from trumping, because that would have left him with clubs, having to lead into dummy's ♣A-Q.

When East tried endplaying North by leading the ♣10, covering with the Jack – Queen – King left North with another club trick as well as his heart winner. He cashed his ♥10 and claimed two down.

Quick learner, my partner! (He is only 18 years old.)

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