

“Billy’s Arabesque” contributed by Bill Voedisch

I’d like to show a declarer play you have likely never seen or considered before. Others have surely discovered this play before I did, but I could not find it in any literature it was not in Watson’s “Play of the Hand” as I recall. So I’ll gave it a name ... “Billy’s Arabesque.” Sounds like a ballet move and, in a way, it is pretty elegant.

Years ago I had a dummy with no outside entry, and at NT I needed to develop a dummy suit that looked a little hopeless. Here’s an example hand that features the suit and the play.

The bidding, starting with me: 1D-P-1H-P-1NT-P-P-P

The opening lead was the J of spades and dummy comes down:

Dummy: Q532 AJT53 T4 J3

Me: K6 K9 AQ842 QT72

I know I’m ducking in dummy but when RHO produces the 7, it looks like LHO started with JT9x and RHO has the A7x of spades, and thus the Q will never be an entry to dummy. (Note: Even if RHO plays small likely indicating 3 cards and no honor, then LHO likely started with AJTx . In this case the Q is still not an entry since, later if I lead towards dummy’s Q of spades to run hearts, LHO can keep me off dummy by rising with the A of spades, hoping my spade suit was Kx.)

And why do I need an entry to dummy? Because the heart suit looks impossible to play.

So there I am, looking at hearts between the two hands, and no normal play looks right. K followed by the finesse, and if it loses to the Q on my right, I get only ONE heart trick. *One dummy trick*. K and small to the A and if the Q does not drop, I get only two hearts tricks.

So this is what I did: I tabled the 9 of hearts and let it ride when LHO played low, hoping that RHO would win the Q. And they did! They shifted to a diamond, dummy’s weakest minor which was helpful as I ducked and the K won on my left. They did take 2 more spades but I kept ducking in dummy and now I will score the Q later. After winning the A of spades, RHO returned a dime which I won. I took another dime and then played the K of hearts, overtaking in dummy, and when both opps followed, I took the rest of the hearts 4 heart winners in all. In total I won 2 spades, 4 hearts and 2 dimes for 120.

LHO could switch to clubs after winning the K of dimes and hold me to 90.

The thing about this crazy looking play is this: it’s not crazy at all ... but you need to recognize it when it shows up and then, execute it. Oh, the suit could also be- Dummy: AJT9x Me: Kx In this case I win the opening spade in my hand and lead my small heart, calling for dummy’s J.

Oh, don’t tell RHO but they can beat the Arabesque by ducking with the Qxxx of hearts or even the Qxx. Ain’t this game great.