

## AVOIDING THE DANGEROUS HAND

By Bill Voedisch

This is a test in declarer play. South deals and opens 1NT. North has no majors so makes the straight forward raise to 3NT, which is the final contract.

West is on lead and starts the K of spades, you survey the hand and eventually call the 2 from dummy, East playing the 3. Plan your play.

	NORTH	
	S: T2	
	H: A86	
	D: AT93	
	C: KQT6	
WEST		EAST
S: KQJ95		S: 843
H: Q754		H: JT93
D: Q2		D: 864
C: 54		C: J87
	SOUTH	
	S: A76	
	H: K2	
	D: KJ75	
	C: A932	

The K of spades looks to be the top of a sequence that includes KQJ. E plays the 3 and is giving partner count. With the 2 in dummy, E's 3 is their lowest card and therefore shows an odd number of spades, in this case 3. Therefore, W has 5 spades and you must hold up in spades TWICE to get all spades out of E's hand. So you duck the K and when W continues the Q you duck again as E plays the 4. W continues the J, you discard a heart from dummy as E plays the 8, and you are forced to win the A.

### Avoiding the dangerous hand

You can see 8 tricks: 1 spade, 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 3 clubs. If clubs break normally (3-2) or the J falls singleton, you have 9. But this is matchpoints and the goal is to maximize your tricks. The suit that can provide additional tricks is diamonds.

Given the spade length with W, it looks like E will be longer in diamonds than W, and E is therefore *favoured to hold the Q*. But it would be wrong ... that is, DANGEROUS ... to play a small diamond to dummy's A and then call the Ten trying to trap E's hoped-for Q. West wins the Q and down you go. *You know if you ever let W in they will cash 2 more spades and beat 3NT, so you must play the hand to keep W out.*

You play safe and finesse against the Q in West's hand, *not caring if they have it*.

So you start the K of dimes from your hand in order to drop a possible stiff Q with East. (Yes, West could have 5 spades and 4 diamonds.) Both opps play low so you continue the J, and even if W has the Qxxx, you win all 4 dimes. But on your J, W produces the Q OK, 4 diamond tricks.

Now, finish up the dimes giving someone a chance to toss a club. But clubs break, so 11 tricks.

### Conclusion

Declarer has lots to do in playing the hand. Whether in a suit contract or NT, declarer needs to determine if there is a dangerous defender hand, and keep them off lead if possible.

### **BONUS HAND**

Dummy:

S: Axx

H: AQxx

D: Kxx

C: KQx

You:

S: KQxx

H: xx

D: ATxx

C: Jxx

You dealt and your side gets to 3NT. What was the bidding that got you there? After 2 passes partner opens 1C, you respond 1S and partner then bids 2H, a REVERSE showing 4 hearts and 16+ HCP. With 10 HCP you waste no time and jump to 3NT, which ends the matter.

LHO starts the 8 of clubs looking like top of nothing, you call the K from dummy, RHO wins the A and sends one back. You may need entries to your hand later so you win the Q in dummy. RHO may have 5 clubs. You need 9 tricks and you see 8: 3 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 2 clubs.

What's the best chance for a 9<sup>th</sup> trick, the heart finesse working or spades being 3-3?

NOTE: Alternate bidding might find Partner opening 1NT with 18 HCP and a square hand. After your 2C Stayman call and partner's 2H, you jump to 3NT.