

Test Your Expert Declarer Play

Or

You can do the right thing...

By

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At teams, two of the most important commandments are:

1. Do not get doubled and go for a big number, and
2. When declaring, make sure of your contract, before trying for overtricks.

Here is a hand that came up in tournament play, where all the players were among the best in the world.

Form of scoring: IMPs; **Contract:** 3NT

Dummy:

♠ A5

♥ AKJ954

♦ 982

♣ 73

Declarer:

♠ KQJ10

♥ 107

♦ KJ7

♣ AJ95

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♣
Pass	1♥	Pass	1NT ¹
Pass	3♥ ²	Pass	3NT

All Pass

¹ 15-17

² Forcing

Lead: ♦4 (low from interest). East wins the ace and returns the ♦3. Plan the play.

Solution

This is what the expert declarer thought:

'West has likely led from four or five diamonds. The only danger is if West wins the 2nd round of diamonds and shifts to a club. Now, you are in jeopardy if the heart finesse loses and East returns a club through your ♣J9 and West started with ♣K10x(x) or ♣Q10x(x).

'If I win the 2nd diamond, and take the heart finesse, I am completely safe. If the finesse loses, and East plays a club I have 11 tricks. Even if East has another diamond that means that the diamonds are distributed no worse than 4-3 and all the defence can score are 3 diamonds and 1 heart.

With complete confidence, the expert declarer won the 2nd diamond with the king (west following with the ♦5), and led the ten of hearts, finessing. However, East won, and cashed three diamond tricks!!! The full deal:

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

♦ K J 7

♣ A J 9 5

You will not be surprised to learn that that West was Zia Mahmood, one of the best players in the world over the last four plus decades, and unmatched for his imagination at the bridge table.

His reasoning was that this contract looked likely to make and he made a subtle false card, that he hoped wouldn't affect partner's defence. As is more often than not, he was right!

Lesson to Learn

Despite Zia being right, and creating a great magazine hand, the lesson here is that deceptive play is also available to defenders, but is more dangerous, as it may lead partner to make inaccurate assumptions, and thus mis-defend. Defence is a partnership enterprise, and one fancy play, even if it works, will often erode the partnership confidence.