

They also Serve who only Stand and Wait

	♠ Q3		Dir: S
	♥ QJ4		Vul: EW
	♦ J872		
	♣ KQ54		
♠ K72		♠ AJ84	
♥ K85		♥ A92	
♦ AK543		♦ QT9	
♣ J9		♣ A32	
	♠ T965		
	♥ T763		
	♦ 6		
	♣ T876		

Bidding:

South	West	North	East
Pass	1D	Pass	1S
Pass	1NT	Pass	3NT

The term Yarborough, well-known in bridge, for a hand of 13 cards with no card higher than a 9 was named after the 2nd Earl of Yarborough (1809 to 1862) who was fond of betting at odds 1000:1 against it. Since contract bridge had not been invented in that period, it is assumed he was referring to its forerunner, whist. The odds of picking up a Yarborough have been calculated as 1/1828 but they do occur occasionally.

More common are the pseudo-yarboroughs which do not contain royal cards, but may contain tens. Such was the case for poor South recently in the Board shown above but as far as a pseudo-yarborough, she would have to concede it was better than most....and so it proved.

North led her 4C which declarer ran around to her JC.

Thoughts:

In the HOW, a fortnight ago, strategies to optimise your 3NT contract were discussed which included the guideline to attempt to put the dangerous opponent in first if there is a chance the opponents may be able to get in twice before you have ensured your contract.

On this Board, making 3NT is not a problem but the guidelines still apply to avoid losing unnecessary tricks. If diamonds break it looks like declarer now has 11 tricks via 2 x spades, 2 x hearts, 5 x diamonds and 2 x clubs with extra tricks possible in the spade suit.

Checking that the diamonds break should be declarer's first task. The spade finesse (and check for a 3-3 break) can wait because that must be taken into the South, the non-dangerous, hand. When North is found to hold 4 x diamonds including the JD, declarer should let North in so that she can make her fifth diamond before tackling the spades. With the favourable spade situation, 11 tricks will still be won.

Pseudo-Yarboroughs can Matter:

As it happened on this Board, taking the spade finesse first was not a problem and declarer first correctly played the KS and then, noting the QS dropping from the North hand as she led towards the dummy, she won the AS and the JS. She then, perhaps in a forgetful moment common to all of us, played the 8S. In order to keep her diamonds, North was becoming squeezed at this point having already discarded a small club. She now, cleverly, discarded a small heart. South who had nearly dozed off at this stage proudly won the 10S. South then led another club which declarer won in dummy with the AC and started on the diamonds. When they failed to break, declarer decided to cash up. North's JH and QH fell under the AH and KH and with only a rag club and a rag heart left in dummy, declarer chose to lead her heart.

South who had discarded her remaining clubs on the second and third round of diamonds now won the 10H and 7H which resulted in three tricks for the defence, all of them won by the pseudo-yarborough and none by her partner despite holding all the defence's points!

Who said pseudo-yarboroughs don't matter?

