

A Double-Edged Sword

♠ AQ962		♠ J85
♥ 3		♥ K84
♦ KQ843		♦ J5
♣ J4		♣ AK983

With N/S vulnerable, you are Dealer, sitting West.

Bidding:

West	North	East	South
1S	2C	3C*	4H
4S	Double	Passed out	

*Cue raise= strong raise to 3S.

North leads the QH. You duck and after much thought, South wins the AH and returns a small heart. Can you make your doubled contract?

Thoughts:

This hand was played in the first round of the Clubs Championship Pairs. It reminds me of the Rudyard Kipling poem "if". With a little bit of licence:

"If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs.....you will be a *bridge expert(sic)*, my son.".....this is, of course, a lot easier said than done

Many hands require a great deal of forethought and this one is no exception. What is South's vulnerable 4H bid and what is North's double based on? If you can get this right, you will make your contract.

What can South possibly have for her vulnerable 4H bid? Almost certainly an eight-card suit headed by the AJ and nothing else giving North 11 points for her 2-level overcall including the singleton QH, KS AD and QC. You must ruff the heart return and the crux of the hand is with what? North must have the KS but who has the 10S? Given North's overcall of 2C, South has a singleton club at most leaving her 4 cards in spades and diamonds. Let us assume that she has at least two diamonds since North did not make an unusual 2NT bid. Therefore, you can assume she has a doubleton spade. Ruff with the QS in case North has K10x. If North over-ruffs she cannot lead a club so she will lead a diamond. If the lead is a small diamond, win with the JD and draw trumps before running the JC unless it is covered. If North does not over-ruff lead towards the JS.

Not one of the 17/18 Wests who played this hand in 4S made it, probably all discarding or ruffing too low on the second round of hearts. The QH was led on most occasions. Only one West was doubled and while that gained North/South an extra 50, this was a small gain versus the downside risk of the close-call double giving the extra information to West to allow her to make a doubled contract. However, declarer had to keep her "cool" under the pressure of the double to analyse the hand before committing to play in order to make the most of that information.

The full hand is given below.

BOARD 12					
BD: 12	♠ K73 ♥ Q ♦ AT62 ♣ QT752				Dlr: W Vul: NS
♠ AQ962					♠ J85
♥ 3					♥ K84
♦ KQ843					♦ J5
♣ J4					♣ AK983
♠ T4 ♥ AJT97652 ♦ 97 ♣ 6					
	♣	♦	♥	♠	NT
N	-	-	3	-	-
S	-	-	3	-	-
E	2	2	-	4	3
W	3	2	-	4	3
					11
				12	12
					5