

DON'S CORNER

by Don Gardner

You are playing in a weekly pair game. You and your partner are dealt the following hands:

North (Partner)

♠ J 3
♥ 6 4 3
♦ A J 10 8 3 2
♣ 7 4

South (You)

♠ A K 4
♥ A J 2
♦ K 9
♣ A Q J 5 2

You and your partner arrive at a decent 3NT contract with the following bidding:

You	Partner
2♣	2♦
2NT	3NT

Note that partner did not insist upon playing a diamond contract, but a sensible 3NT.

The opening lead is the 8♠, which you cover with the Jack. However, East plays the Queen and you win fearful of a switch to a heart.

How do you plan the play with a nice diamond suit in the dummy with limited access to it? Scroll down for the Solution.

SOLUTION

Here is the full layout:

	North (Partner)	
	♠ J 3	
	♥ 6 4 3	
	♦ A J 10 8 3 2	
	♣ 7 4	
West		East
♠ 10 8 7 6 2		♠ Q 9 5
♥ K 10 8 7		♥ Q 9 5
♦ 6 4		♦ Q 7 5
♣ 8 3		♣ K 10 9 6
	South	
	♠ A K 4	
	♥ A J 2	
	♦ K 9	
	♣ A Q J 5 2	

If you play the K♦ and then finesse the Jack, if it wins you are in no trouble. However, if it loses you won't make your contract. Similarly, if you play the K♦ then the A♦ and the Q♦ does not fall, you have the same problem.

The solution is easy once you understand the potential problem in diamonds. Lead the 9♦ and finesse the Jack. If it loses, you have nine tricks: five diamonds, two spades, one heart, and one club. If it wins, you cannot depend upon the Q♦ to fall when the Ace is played. Time to execute a back-up play.

When the finesse wins, play a club and finesse the Q♣ (West follows low). If it fails, you need clubs to be 3-3 or the Q♦ to fall. But if the finesse wins, play the K♦ to the A♦ to see if the Queen falls. When it does not, take another club finesse and continue clubs with the Ace and another. You will end up with these nine tricks: four clubs, two diamonds, two spades and one heart.

Before you play to the opening lead, you need to recognize the importance of the club suit as a backup, if needed.