

DON'S CORNER

by Don Gardner

You are playing in your weekly club duplicate game when you encounter these hands:

North (Partner)

♠ K 5
♥ Q J 10 7 5
♦ A 7 5
♣ A Q 8

South (You)

♠ 7 4
♥ A K 8 6 4
♦ K Q 4
♣ 9 5 4

You open 1♥ and quickly find yourself in 4♥. The Q♠ was the opening lead. What is your plan to land the game?

Scroll down for the solution.

SOLUTION

The first decision you must make is what to play on the opening lead. Most fatal errors are made at trick one than at any other time. Does the opening leader have the A♠, or does East? Sometimes (but rarely) the opening has led the Q from an AQ holding against a suit contract. You must place the Ace with East.

Here is the full layout:

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

At trick one, duck the Q♠ lead. If a spade is continued, East wins with the Ace and must return a red suit. Draw trumps, clear diamonds, and lead a small club. Cover whatever card West plays as cheaply as possible and East will win and be end-played. You will lose only one club. Place the defenders' club holdings any way you wish and you will lose only one.

Notice, if West leads a club at trick two, you must win the Ace. Pull trumps, clear diamonds, and then play the K♠. East is end-played as before and can win only one club trick.

The end-play will not work if you cover the Q♠ at trick one. East will win, play a second spade back to partner, and a club lead will now assure two club tricks for the defense.