

DON'S CORNER

by Don Gardner

You are playing in a weekly club duplicate game with you and partner holding these cards:

	Partner (North)
♠	K J 8
♥	8 7 6 5
♦	9 8 3
♣	A J 3

	You (South)
♠	A 7 5 4 3
♥	A Q 4 3
♦	A 4
♣	Q 2

You are the dealer and arrive at a shaky 4♥ contract with this bidding:

You	Partner
1♠	2♠
3♥	4♥
All pass	

You choose the 4-4 heart fit knowing that the five-card spade suite might offer important discards.

The opening lead is the 6♣ which you duck losing to the King on your right. Right-hand opponent returns the 10♦. You are in danger of losing a trick in each suit, possible two in hearts. Plan the play.

SCROLL DOWN FOR THE SOLUTION

SOLUTION

You have created a place for a diamond discard, but you cannot take it yet for fear of a ruff. You have to attack trumps first and must assume they are divided 3-2 with the King on-sides.

Go to the dummy with a spade to the King and finesse the Q♥. It wins and you draw a second round with the Ace finding the trumps to be 3-2. Now you can pitch your diamond loser.

Here is the full layout:

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

You play the A♠ and are pleased to see the Queen drop. You give up a trump trick and take the rest of the tricks.

The key to the playing of this hand is to recognize the need to play trumps before pitching your diamond loser on a club. The only safe way to get to dummy is to play a spade to the King. This keeps you from taking an ill-fated spade finesse allowing you to make an over trick.

In the game, no other pair took eleven tricks and only two took as many as ten. Of those, only one had bid game.

As an added exercise, plan the play with a diamond as the opening lead. With proper planning, you can still make eleven tricks.