

An interesting hand?

With West dealer and NS vulnerable, as South you hold:

S K
H A76
D A105
C KJ10752

West passes as does North and East opens 4S. Somewhat reluctantly but not holding the four or more hearts you would need to double and noting the vulnerability, you pass as do West and North. What do you lead? The bidding is hardly informative beyond telling you East has at least seven spades so this looks like a bit of a blind guess. You dismiss SK as declarer might take a finesse into your hand. Either red suit ace could be wrong if declarer has an unsupported king and a club could be into AQ. Not a pleasant choice! In the end you decide that East might have blasted 4S to shut you out of a possible heart contract and settle on HA. This exposes the following dummy:

S 5
H 109843
D KJ9864
C 4

Declarer plays low from dummy, partner plays HQ and declarer H2. What now? A switch to DA or a club looks just as unattractive as it did at trick 1 so you lead a second heart in the (very faint) hope that partner has a singleton queen. Declarer plays H8 from dummy, partner covers with HJ and declarer wins with the king. He then lays down SA, dropping your king, draws the remainder of North's trumps and claims the rest from CA and three more heart tricks on table. 12 tricks made. Study of the Bridgmate reveals that everyone else was in 4S with a variety of degrees of success. Some made just 4S, others 5S and only your opponent made twelve tricks. Drat! The full hand was:

	North	
	S 8762	
	H QJ	
	D Q72	
	C Q986	
West		East
S 5		S AQJ10943
H 109843		H K52
D KJ9864		D 3
C 4		C A3
	South	
	S K	
	H A76	
	D A105	
	C KJ10752	

Study of the printout confirms that with HA led and H continuation, twelve tricks are easy when declarer is forced to lay down SA (because the only entry to dummy is a club ruff). If DA is led followed by HA and a H continuation, declarer is restricted to eleven tricks. A CJ lead allows declarer to ruff a club in dummy and restrict his losers to two hearts and a diamond, ten tricks made.

But have you spotted the 'killer' lead which actually beats the contract? Revisit your lead analysis before turning to page 2.

The original lead analysis correctly identified significant objections to a lead from hearts, diamonds or clubs. This should have drawn South into revisiting his early decision to discount SK. In all the circumstances, was declarer actually likely to finesse? Your controls in the side suits suggested that entries to dummy might be limited and more importantly if the 'wild' distribution of declarer's hand included a void, the lead of either red ace might be ruffed by declarer, setting up a king in dummy. Additionally, given your club length, dummy might be short and declarer might look to club ruffs in dummy to add to his trumps tricks in hand. If after all of this you came down about 60:40 in favour of the lead of SK, your +50 would have been the only NS plus score on the Bridgmate. Well done!

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