

A Hold-Up Play

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

<p>♠ K Q 6 ♥ A Q 8 6 ♦ 4 ♣ J 9 7 6 3</p>	<p>♠ A 8 3 ♥ 4 3 2 ♦ Q 10 9 ♣ K Q 8 5</p>	<p>♠ J 10 9 5 2 ♥ J 10 9 5 ♦ 8 7 6 ♣ 10</p>	<p>♠ 7 4 ♥ K 7 ♦ A K J 5 3 2 ♣ A 4 2</p>
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	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <p style="margin: 0;">N</p> <p style="margin: 0;">W E</p> <p style="margin: 0;">S</p> </div>		
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West	North	East	South
			1 ♦
Dbl	Rdbl	1 ♠	3 ♦
Pass	3 NT	4 ♥	5 ♦
All pass			

After N-S reached 3NT, East, figuring that his side had a profitable sacrifice, offered his partner a choice between 4♥ and 4♠. This pushed N-S to the perilous contract of 5♦, which, as you will see, declarer is about to bungle.

Against 5♦ West leads the ♠K, won by dummy's ♠A and trumps are drawn. Declarer can count ten top tricks, but where is the eleventh? Not the ♥K as West needs the ♥A to justify his takeout double. That means that a fourth club trick is required. Are clubs 3-3? Let's count the hand. East bid both majors and is no doubt at least 4-4 in those suits. He also showed up with three diamonds. That leaves two clubs at most. But would East bid so much with 4-4-3-2 distribution and virtually no HCP? No, it seems more likely that East is 5-4-3-1 and, if so, declarer must hope that East's club is the ♣J or ♣10 or ♣9. He cashes the ♣A and, seeing East's ♣10, prepares to take an impressively deep finesse of the ♣8 on the second round!

Well counted for eleven tricks except for one tiny detail. That's right, West can also count and he inserts the ♣9 on the second round of clubs. Now declarer is locked in dummy with no safe way back to his hand (if he plays a spade, East will be sure to win and fire a heart through). Down one.

Declarer's play was flawless right up to the point where he called for dummy's ♠A at trick one. Instead, he must hold up the ♠A and win the second round. That way, later in the play, he can get safely back to hand with a spade ruff and take that second club finesse. Yet another contract bites the dust because of hasty play at trick one.