

The Scissors Coup

By Brian Gunnell

Today's deal features the Scissors Coup, so-called because it cuts communications between the two defenders.

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♦	Dbl	4 ♦	4 ♠
5 ♦	Pass	Pass	5 ♠
All pass			

East's four diamonds was preemptive, showing long diamonds and not much else.

As West, what's your opening lead? It would be reasonable to lead king of clubs, attempting to set up a club trick while you still have the ace of diamonds entry. That doesn't work on the actual deal because of declarer's club singleton. A more promising plan might be to lead the singleton heart, later winning the ace of spades, then *underleading* the diamond ace to East's hoped-for king, and getting a heart ruff for down one. As you can see, that plan is the winner. Well, not quite, because there is a clever counter-measure. How can Declarer deprive West of his ruff?

Enter the Scissors Coup. Declarer wins the heart lead in dummy, and before touching trumps he cashes the ace of clubs and leads another club, *pitching a Diamond* when East plays low. By this maneuver declarer trades a diamond loser for a club loser, in the process thwarting West in his plan to reach East with the king of diamonds. Now, with the defensive communications snipped, Declarer loses only the ace of spades and a club (but there is no diamond loser and no heart ruff).

Post Script: As West you no doubt found that well-thought-out heart opening lead. Then as declarer you made a clever play to bring home the five spade contract. Next, imagine that you hold the East cards, but with the six of clubs replaced by the jack. Now, after Dummy's club ace has been cashed, when a second club is played, we are quite confident that you would alertly hop up with that jack, foiling the Scissors Coup. Nice play!