

The Devil's Coup

By Brian Gunnell

You could play a lifetime of bridge without pulling off a Devil's Coup, but it's worth a look purely for its entertainment value.

<p>Board 4 West Deals Both Vul</p>	<p>♠ A 10 4 ♥ Q 9 5 4 ♦ K J 9 6 ♣ A 7</p>	<p>♠ Q 8 ♥ J 10 6 3 ♦ 7 5 3 ♣ J 6 3 2</p>		
<p>♠ J 7 3 ♥ A 8 7 2 ♦ 10 8 2 ♣ Q 5 4</p>	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W S E</td></tr> </table>	N	W S E	
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	<p>♠ K 9 6 5 2 ♥ K ♦ A Q 4 ♣ K 10 9 8</p>			

It looks like partner has overbid again because you find yourself in the dreadful contract of six spades. West cashes the ace of hearts at trick one and now the success of your slam depends upon losing no trump tricks, missing Q, J, 8, 7, and 3. The chances of one defender holding Q-J doubleton are pretty remote (8%, actually) and you can do better by *not* drawing trumps.

You ruff the heart continuation, cash three diamonds (ending in dummy), ruff another heart, cash the ace and king of clubs, and ruff a club, reaching this position, with the lead in dummy:

<p>♠ J 7 3 ♥ 7 ♦ — ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ A 10 ♥ Q ♦ 9 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ Q 8 ♥ J ♦ — ♣ J</p>		
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N				
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	<p>♠ K 9 6 ♥ — ♦ — ♣ 10</p>			

Do you see how to win the rest of the tricks? Sure you do! You ruff dummy's queen of hearts (even though it is a winner!) and, when the ten of clubs is led, the defense is toast. *If West ruffs low* then dummy overruffs and you score the last two tricks with the ace and king of spades ... *if West ruffs high* then dummy overruffs and there is now a finesse position against East's queen! Devilish indeed!

To bring off this small miracle, West's distribution had to be precisely 3-4-3-3 or 3-5-3-2 and he had to hold one of the missing spade honors. We don't know if that offers better odds than the aforementioned 8%, but we are sure that bringing off the Devil's Coup is so much more fun!