


Thrust and Parry

By Brian Gunnell

East made a couple of fine defensive plays on this deal, but declarer parried with some good plays of his own, and eventually prevailed.

Board 12
 West Deals
 N-S Vul

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

West *North* *East* *South*
 2 ♠ Pass Pass 3 NT
 All pass
 3 NT by South
 Lead: ♠ K

West leads the ♠K, and declarer ducks the first round, just in case West was being frisky and bid two spades on a five-card suit. The purpose of that “hold-up play” is to make sure that East is out of spades when he later gains the lead.

Declarer wins the second round of spades (East pitches a club), and must flush out East’s aces in order to reach nine tricks. He leads the ♣K, but East cleverly ducks that, making his own hold-up play in order to shut out dummy’s club suit. Declarer persists with clubs and East wins the second round, then exits with a diamond. Next comes the ♥K, but again East holds up his ace, and holds up yet again when declarer plays the ♥J! East has succeeded in keeping declarer from reaching dummy, but only temporarily. Declarer leads another heart, which East must win. Again, East exits with a diamond. Declarer cashes the remaining diamond winners and loses the fifth round to East. East’s remaining card is a club and that gives declarer his ninth trick. It took a while, but finally, at trick thirteen, declarer reaches dummy!

Post Script: If declarer had held three clubs instead of just two, East would have wanted to duck the second club and win the third round. How did East know to win the second round instead? His helpful partner gave him a count signal, playing the two on the first round. By playing a low club West showed an odd number ... if West had held a doubleton, he would have played his high club to show an even number. Nice defense by East-West, albeit in a losing cause.