

A Smooth Duck

By Brian Gunnell

Board 7
South Deals
Both Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			1 ♣
Pass	1 ♠	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 ♥	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

3 NT by South
Lead: ♦ 10

Some North-South pairs might blunder into four spades (down one), but our own North-South stumbled instead into 3NT. West led a diamond (the ten is standard from that holding) won by East's ace. Then a diamond to the queen and king, and a third diamond. Declarer won that, lost the heart finesse, but now had nine easy tricks (a spade, three hearts, a diamond, four clubs).

The defense could have done better! It was fine to lead and continue diamonds, but East missed a chance when declarer took that heart finesse. Yes, indeed, East should smoothly duck that trick! When declarer repeats the heart finesse, East pounces with the king and shoots back a club. With no entries to dummy's hearts, declarer is up the creek and down one.

Next, suppose that, when the heart finesse is taken, East ducks, but this time not smoothly. Now a resourceful declarer may smell a rat, in which case he can make the contract anyway. He wins the second round of hearts with the ace, and cashes the clubs. By now West is down to ♠K6 and ♦82. Declarer has ♠A98 and ♥7 and will exit with the diamond. After taking his two diamonds, West is forced to play spades, and if declarer guesses correctly he will play the ♠Q and make his contract.

Post Script: Of course, it would be quite improper for East, when not holding the ♥K, to fake out declarer by hesitatingly unduly on the first heart, simulating a non-smooth duck. Such shenanigans are OK for poker, but not for bridge.