

Payback Time

By Brian Gunnell

Recently, our West has been a bit of a pest, frequently coming up with dastardly plays which make declarer's life difficult. Today West makes a slight slip and becomes the victim.

Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

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

♠ K Q 8 6 4 2			
♥ A K 9			
♦ 10 2			
♣ K 6			

West	North	East	South
	2 ♠	Pass	1 ♠
2 ♦			4 ♠
All pass			
4 ♠ by South			
Lead: ♦ A			

Perhaps South was a little boisterous in the bidding, a more prudent player would have merely invited game. But making seemingly impossible contracts is one of the joys of the game, and your job is to make ten tricks after West plays three rounds of diamonds.

It looks pretty grim, doesn't it? Two diamonds have already been lost, the ♠A is another loser, and there appears to be an inescapable heart loser. Down one? No, it's too soon to give up! Declarer has a long-shot route to success, which requires that West started with the singleton trump ace and no more than two hearts. Step one is to cash the top clubs and ruff a club. Step two is to cash the ♥A and the ♥K. Now, step three is to exit with a trump. Let's relish West's discomfort! Declarer's fine play has eliminated all of West's safe exit cards. With nothing left but diamonds and clubs, whatever West plays will give declarer a ruff and discard ... he'll ruff the return in one hand and discard the "inescapable" heart loser from the other. Making ten tricks!

You see where West went wrong, of course. He needed to cash the ♠A early in the play (before the third round of diamonds). Now, the elimination play does not work, and declarer will eventually be down one.