


Timing Is Everything

By Brian Gunnell

Board 6
 East Deals
 E-W Vul

<p>♠ Q J 10 9 6 5 3 ♥ 10 8 ♦ 8 5 ♣ 5 4</p>		<p>♠ 4 ♥ 9 7 6 5 ♦ A 9 6 3 2 ♣ A K Q</p>	<p>♠ K ♥ K Q J ♦ K Q J 10 4 ♣ 10 7 6 3</p>
<p>West</p> <p>2 ♠ All pass</p> <p>4 ♥ by South Lead: ♠ Q</p>	<p>North</p> <p>dbl</p>	<p>East</p> <p>1 ♦ Pass</p>	<p>South</p> <p>Pass 4 ♥</p>

West's two spade response (showing long spades and not much else) pushed North-South into the precarious contract of four hearts. Look at what happened in actual play, and then figure out how you would have done better as declarer.

West led the ♠Q, won by declarer's ace. With six side-suit tricks it would be necessary to score four trump tricks, and as the trump suit was so weak it was apparent that some ruffing would be required. One line that would clearly not work would be to get the enemy trumps out of the way first, that would leave declarer a trick short (scoring only three trump tricks). So declarer cashed the ♥A at trick two, and then, leaving three enemy trumps at large, he played on the side-suits. His general plan was to let the opponents take their trumps whenever they wished, but that was all they would get. He started with dummy's high clubs, but West ruffed the third round and played another spade. Dummy ruffed, East over-ruffed and cashed his high heart, leaving declarer with just nine tricks.

Declarer needed to time the play better if he was to score ten tricks. At trick two he must duck a trump! Now, he wins the diamond return, plays the ace of trumps and (leaving one enemy trump at large) goes about his business of cashing winners and cross-ruffing. Altogether declarer has eleven potential tricks via the ♥A, four ruffs and six side-suit winners, but that enemy trump will rub out one of those tricks and reduce the total to ten. Making four hearts, thanks to careful timing.