

That Sinking Feeling

By Brian Gunnell

Board 15
South Deals
N-S Vul

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

7 ♠ by South
Lead: ♦ K

	♠ —
W	♥ Q J 9 5 4 3
N	♦ J 8 2
E	♣ Q J 9 8
S	♠ Q J 10 9 8 3
	♥ A K 8
	♦ A 3
	♣ 7 2

The auction has not been recorded for posterity, but we can say that North-South must have bid quite superbly in order to reach the excellent contract of seven spades. "Nicely bid, partner! A cold grand slam with only 28 combined HCP!" enthused declarer when dummy was tabled after the opening lead of the ♦K. Declarer was quite right, the slam was cold, but not the way that he played it. Of course, you can do better. How do you propose to make thirteen tricks?

Declarer didn't bother to count his tricks, perhaps feeling that it would have been rather unsporting to waste time when he had so many trumps and club winners. At trick two, he played a trump to dummy's ace and, when East showed out, declarer paused for thought (one trick too late!). It was then that he got that awful sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach, realizing that he could no longer get two ruffs in dummy because of the shortage of entries back to his hand. Getting only one ruff would leave him a trick short, so he tried to set up the clubs, but that lifeline failed him when the suit was 4-1. Down one!

"Rotten luck", sympathized North, in soothing tones. "If spades or clubs had broken reasonably you would have made your slam". What North politely refrained from saying was, "Why on earth didn't you win the opening diamond lead, cash the hearts (pitching diamonds), ruff a diamond high, get back to hand with a trump, ruff a heart high, cross back with another trump, and draw the last trump?"