

The Forcing Game

North might well have rebid 1NT (showing 12-14) but, being a polite sort of fellow, he supported partner's spades. Either way, South was destined to declare four spades, and the fate of that contract rested on West's opening lead. What would be your choice?

When the hand was played in real life, West led a club and got the immediate gratification of a club ruff at trick two. West shifted to the ♦K, won in dummy, followed by a trump to the queen and South's ace. West persisted with diamonds, but declarer ruffed that, drew the remaining trumps, and had nothing left but winners. Making ten tricks.

Board 17
North Deals
None Vul

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|--|-----------|---|--|---|--|---|--|---|--|--------------|--|
| ♠ A 10 9 8 | ♠ K 5 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♥ 9 8 3 2 | ♥ A 7 6 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♦ K Q J 3 | ♦ A 5 4 | ♠ 6 | | | | | | | | | | |
| ♣ 6 | ♣ Q 8 7 2 | ♥ J 5 4 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table> | | N | | W | | E | | S | | ♦ 10 9 8 7 6 | |
| | N | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W | | E | | | | | | | | | | |
| | S | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♠ Q J 7 4 3 | ♣ A 9 4 3 | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♥ K Q 10 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♦ 2 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ♣ K J 10 5 | | | | | | | | | | | |

| West | North | East | South |
|----------|--------------|------|-------|
| | 1 ♣ | Pass | 1 ♠ |
| Pass | 2 ♠ | Pass | 4 ♠ |
| All pass | | | |
| | 4 ♠ by South | | |

West was on the wrong track when he pursued the club ruff. That served only to weaken his trump holding while establishing club winners for declarer. Thanks to those good intermediate cards West had two trump tricks even without scoring a ruff. He would have done better to attack diamonds immediately. Look what happens. Declarer wins the opening diamond lead, loses a trick to the ♠A, ruffs the diamond continuation, and then gets the bad news about the 4-1 trump split. Declarer must still lose a trick to the ♣A and now another diamond is ruinous and 4♠ goes down.

The moral to this story is:

When you have a powerful trump holding it usually doesn't pay to go after ruffs. Better to attack with the defense's strong suit, forcing declarer to weaken his own trumps and (hopefully) to lose control.