

A Self-Inflicted Wound

Yesterday, the defense prevailed by forcing declarer to ruff repeatedly, causing him to lose trump control in the process. Today's declarer suffered a similar fate but in this case he had no excuse, his defeat was entirely self-inflicted.

Against four hearts, West led the ♦K, won by declarer's ace. Assuming that clubs were breaking 3-2, and by taking a diamond ruff in dummy, declarer could count ten tricks (five trump winners, ♦A and a diamond ruff, and three clubs). The only losers would be a spade, the ♥K, and a club.

A pretty simple hand, eh? Well, not exactly! Declarer won the diamond opening lead, ruffed a diamond in dummy, and cashed the ♥A. declarer needed to get back to hand in order to draw trumps, and that would have to be done with a ruff. So he lost a spade, ruffed the diamond return, and played the ♥Q, driving out East's king. With West showing out of hearts on the second round, and with East returning yet another diamond, declarer's goose was cooked. He could ruff the diamond and draw East's remaining trumps, but then would be out of trumps himself. When he later lost the third round of clubs, the defense would cash a spade for down one.

Where did declarer go wrong? At trick two he should have ruffed the diamond with dummy's ace! Now he can play a low heart from the board, overtaking in hand if East plays low. This avoids the need for one of those ruffs, trump control is thereby retained, and ten tricks roll home.

Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

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

West
North
East
South

Pass
4 ♥
All pass
2 ♥

4 ♥ by South
Lead: ♦ K