

Nerves of Steel

Four spades is a miserable contract, and clearly has no chance after the defense cashes two diamonds and gets a diamond ruff. East-West will be happy to go plus, but naturally they would prefer down two to down one. You are West, your nerve is about to be tested.

After getting your diamond ruff, you exit safely with a trump. Dummy's ♠A wins that, the ♥Q is run around successfully, the ♠K is cashed, then the ♥J is covered by the king and ace. Next is a heart ruff and a club to declarer's ace. Have you been busily counting the distribution, Mr. West? Of course you have! By now it is clear that declarer was dealt four spades

(as East followed twice), and three hearts (as East also showed up with three), and three diamonds (from the bidding and the play). That means that declarer started life with three clubs, no more, no less.

You see where this is headed, don't you? Declarer now leads a low club, and you resist the temptation to grab the ♣K for the setting trick. Instead, with an air of nonchalance, you play low, after which it is a pretty safe bet that declarer will guess to finesse the ten, losing to East's jack. Down two!

It didn't really take nerves of steel to duck the ♣K, all that was required was some counting as the play unfolded. That would have reassured West that declarer started with three clubs and not a doubleton, and that the ♣K was sure to score a trick sooner or later.

Board 13
North Deals
Both Vul

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