

Bluff and Double Bluff

South opens a 15-17 1NT, opposite which a nine-point hand is very much on the borderline between bidding game and inviting game. But North's nine-pointer is a particularly fine specimen, what with that five-card suit and all those lovely tens, so in this case North has no qualms whatsoever about bidding 3NT directly.

West's opening lead is his fourth best spade to East's king. East returns the spade nine and, in this situation, it sometimes pays for West to duck the trick, thereby maintaining communications between the East-West hands (so that East still has a spade to lead if and when he gets in again). But here that is not necessary. West has the ♥A as a fast entry and has no need to duck the second spade. So, West wins the ♠A and leads a third round, won by dummy's queen.

At this point, declarer has eight top tricks and must guess the heart suit correctly if he is to make his contract. When he leads a heart from dummy should he play the king or the jack? It may seem like a pure guess, but in fact declarer has a clue. West didn't duck that second spade! Presumably he didn't think it was necessary, and the strong inference is that West has a fast entry, namely the ♥A. So declarer finesses the jack and brings home his contract!

If West is a truly devious fellow (and many bridge players are) then he might duck the second spade anyway, even though it is unnecessary. That could prompt an alert declarer to conclude that West has no fast entry, and therefore that the ♥A must be with East. In that case, declarer hops up with the king and goes down one! Then again, if declarer knows that West is of the devious persuasion, he might smell a rat and guess right anyway. And if West guesses that declarer will smell a rat then he might ...

Board 19

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ A 8 7 2
♥ A 8 4
♦ 8 3 2
♣ 10 7 5

♠ Q 10 3
♥ 10 7
♦ Q J 10 9 5
♣ A 9 8



♠ K 9 5
♥ Q 6 5 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ Q J 3

♠ J 6 4
♥ K J 9 3
♦ A K
♣ K 6 4 2

West	North	East	South
Pass	3 NT	All pass	1 NT
3 NT by South			
Lead: ♠ 2			