

Protecting Partner's Entry

A combined 27 HCP is usually plenty for a 3NT contract, but here the North-South hands did not fit well together. Even so, East needed to keep his wits about him if he was to beat the contract. But, sadly for East-West, East's wits deserted him at the crucial moment. See if you can do better.

Against 3NT West led the ♠Q which held the trick. Dummy's king won the second spade, the diamond finesse lost to West's queen, then back came another spade, won by declarer's ace. Now, when declarer conceded a trick to the ♦A, East was out of spades, so West's spade winners were useless and declarer romped home with nine tricks.

Board 23
South Deals
Both Vul

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| ♠ Q J 10 8 3 ♥ 6 4 ♦ Q 3 2 ♣ 8 7 6 | ♠ K 4 ♥ K 10 3 2 ♦ J 8 7 6 ♣ K Q 5 | ♠ 9 7 5 ♥ Q J 9 7 ♦ A 4 ♣ J 10 9 4 | ♠ A 6 2 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ K 10 9 5 ♣ A 3 2 |
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| N |
| W E |
| S |

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|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> | <i>South</i> |
| Pass | 3 NT | All pass | 1 NT |

3 NT by South
Lead: ♠ Q

Declarer played his part well by holding up on the first spade, in an attempt to disrupt the East-West communications, but East overlooked an effective counter-measure. With South opening a 15-17 1NT, East knew that his partner had a maximum of five HCP, and three of those had already shown up in the spade suit. West's only possible entry to the long spades was the ♦Q, and it was East's job to protect that entry for use later in the hand, when the spades had been established. The way to do that was to disregard the old adage of "second hand low" and to grab the ♦A on the first round of the suit. Now, after the ♠A is knocked out, it is West who wins the second round of diamonds and can cash his spades for down one. Alert play by those Easts who hopped up with the ♦A!