

Conjuring a Trick

North took the direct route to game, but there are better ways to bid that hand. Most tournament players use one heart-four hearts as a preempt (five+ hearts and a weak hand) and use a conventional 2NT bid for the actual North hand, thereby giving North-South the opportunity to investigate slam if appropriate (which in this case it is not!)

Against four hearts West led the ♣K, won by dummy's ace. A trump was lost to West's ace, then West cashed two clubs and exited safely with a diamond. At this point declarer could count nine top tricks. Do you see how he might conjure up a tenth?

Board 19
South Deals
E-W Vul

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

Before declarer commences any conjuring it will occur to her that West has shown up with ♥A and the ♣KQ, and that if he also held the ♠K he would no doubt have been heard from in the bidding. So, East has the ♠K.

At first glance it might appear that the only chance is for the diamonds to break 3-3. What if one defender has four (or more) diamonds *and* the ♠K? In that case could declarer rattle off all her trumps and save the day with a squeeze? Not if it is East who holds the vital cards, because he will be discarding last and will pitch whatever suit dummy pitches. So that squeeze won't work. And we know that West cannot hold the ♠K so clearly the squeeze won't work against him.

Does that mean that we are back to relying on 3-3 diamonds? Actually, no! Declarer has a clever resource available. He leads the ♠Q from dummy, East must cover, and declarer's ace wins the trick. Now the all-important spade card is the jack and there *is* room in West's hand for that. So, declarer now runs the hearts, hoping that diamonds are 3-3 or that West is squeezed in spades and diamonds. ten tricks in exotic fashion (that play is known as a transfer squeeze, so named because it transfers the spade guard from one defender to the other).