

# Dodging an Uppercut

After a particularly virulent outbreak of overbidding, one which afflicted all the combatants other than West, South found himself in the sickly contract of three spades. The defense started with high clubs, and declarer ruffed the second round. How should he proceed?

## Board 7

South Deals  
Both Vul

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

West	North	East	South
			1 ♠
Dbl	2 ♣	2 ♦	Pass
Pass	2 ♠	3 ♦	3 ♠
All pass			
3 ♠ by South			
Lead: ♣ A			

With only four side-suit tricks, declarer would need no fewer than five from the trump suit ... a diamond ruff in dummy would be one of them ... and hopefully three club ruffs and the ♠A would make up the rest. Declarer made the key play of cashing the high hearts next, a necessary step as otherwise, on the second club ruff, East would be able to dump a heart. With the hearts safely cashed, declarer crossed to the ♦K, ruffed another club, cashed ♦A, ruffed a diamond, ruffed a third club, and had his nine tricks.

That was good timing by declarer, but East could have offered sterner resistance. Look what happens if East ruffs the fourth round of clubs with his *queen* (a so-called “uppercut”). Now, if declarer overruffs with the ace, that will be his eighth and final trick. His last four cards will be ♠J8 and two heart losers. He’ll exit with a heart but East will alertly ruff his partner’s winner, and fire a trump through. Down one.

However, declarer can dodge that uppercut by declining to over-ruff with the ace. Instead, he pitches a heart loser, and will come to nine tricks one way or another. If South is going to overbid like that then he needs to play them well.