

Better Bridge



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North

S A 10 9 6 2
H 5 3
D 7 2
C K J 6 5

West

S K Q 8 7
H J 9 2
D K 9 4
C 10 7 2

East

S J 3
H A K 8 6 4
D Q 10 8
C Q 4 3

South

S 5 4
H Q 10 7
D A J 6 5 3
C A 9 8

Dealer — North. North-South vulnerable.

Here is perhaps the most interesting hand from two sessions of play in the Southern California Grand National Pairs district play-off.

Though blessed with 21 of the 40 high-card points and the dominant suit, east-west were not destined for a plus score. At one table the bidding went:

North	East	South	West
Pass	1 H	Pass	1 S
Pass	1 NT	Pass	2 H
All Pass			

West "stole" North's suit with his first response and his partner became declarer, North wondering whether he had been psyched out of the auction. He was, in a small way, but the result left him no room for complaint.

South began with the five of spades. North permitting declarer's jack to win. After drawing two high trumps, East put North on play with a second spade. North could see a sure discard coming on dummy's king of spades since he was not looking at the ace of diamonds. Whether partner or declarer held it, the king was a certain entry to dummy.

His only hope, therefore, was to score quick tricks in clubs. Normal defense, however, would not prevail since East would duck a low club to dummy, with the ten limiting North-South to two tricks in the suit.

North saw one ray of

hope. He shifted to the jack of clubs and, on the actual lie of the cards, earned three tricks in the suit, declarer having no counter. The diamond ace then became the setting trick, worth $25\frac{1}{2}$ of 38 matchpoints for the defense.

North, of course, was fortunate to find partner with precisely the ace, nine, eight, but years of hoping for the best finally paid off.

One North player earned an even better score by opening with a weak two spades in first seat. Lest you think this reckless, be advised that the bid promised eight to 11 high-card points, a five or six-card suit, and two or three-card support for the other major. The understanding reduces the risk a bit.

North was allowed to play there and East had a terrible time. First, he was convinced that he had been bamboozled in the auction and then he had problems defending. After cashing a high heart he realized a shift was mandatory. Unfortunately, he switched to a club, blowing the suit and the defense. The contract was made after declarer knocked out East's other heart honor. He lost, in all, two hearts and three spades, but earned 110 points, an even better result than setting the opponents a trick.

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