

Hand of the Week 09/17/19

By Tom Joyce

Ducking a Trump to Maintain Control

After 3 passes, partner opens 1♣, and RHO overcalls 1♦. Sitting South, you hold ♠ Q8762, ♥ 8, ♦ A105432, ♣ 5. It doesn't have many high cards, but it is a promising hand in the event you have a fit with partner. You have an easy response of 1♠. LHO passes, and partner now responds 2♥. This is a reverse, which imposes a 1-round force on you. Ordinarily, responder's rebid of his suit shows 6 pieces. You, however, are playing a convention called "structured reverses." When playing structured reverses (a very useful treatment, which I highly recommend), responder is required to rebid a 5-card major unless he has a better bid available -- so you rebid 2♠. Partner now rebids 4♠, which ends the auction. The opening lead is the ♦8 and the dummy is revealed.

Dlr: E	♠ A54	
Vul: Both	♥ J743	
	♦ ---	
	♣ AKQJ102	
♠ K103	N	♠ J9
♥ KQ102	W	♥ A965
♦ 87	W	♦ KQJ96
♣ 9743	S	♣ 86
	♠ Q8762	
	♥ 8	
	♦ A105432	
	♣ 5	

<u>West</u>	<u>North</u>	<u>East</u>	<u>South</u>
-	-	Pass	Pass
Pass	1♣	1♦	1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♠
Pass	4♠	All Pass	

Lead: ♦8

Partner's high cards are the minimum for this auction, but it is a powerful playing hand, and it's apparent that you have to utilize dummy's clubs to make your contract. Superficially, it appears you have 1 or 2 spade losers (assuming a 3-2 trump split, which is necessary if the hand is to

make) and 1 heart loser, but there are serious handling issues. Your limited entries to dummy are your biggest problem. You need to score your club tricks to make the hand, but you have to do this without getting locked off dummy (if you do, you will have a lot of diamond losers) or allowing opponents to score any cheap ruffs on your clubs. How do you accomplish this? The answer is by winning the ♦A (pitching a heart from dummy) at trick 1 and then ducking a spade. This enables you to draw a round of trumps without giving up trump control.

East will win. What does he do now? If he leads a heart, you will ruff the second heart and lead a spade to the Ace. You will then play club winners until West ruffs with the master trump. After he ruffs the fifth club, you will still have a trump on the table to ruff a diamond.

If East finds the stronger defense of forcing dummy with the ♦K at trick 3 or if East leads a club, you will cash the spade ace and then start running your clubs. Fortunately for you, the hand with the long clubs also holds the master trump. Thus, you will be able to take 4 pitches, which are just enough to enable you to make your contract.

Out of 18 pairs playing this hand, 5 pairs bid the game in spades and 3 pairs made it. Bidding and making 4♠ collected 15 of 17 match points.