

An Xmas puzzle -answered

The contract of 6D not a very good contract of course but these things happen. The declarer avoided a club lead which would have sunk the contract and received a heart lead. Trumps were drawn in two rounds and the declarer had to broach spades to have any chance of success.

I will show you how the spades did lie and describe how the declarer made their contract. After that I will describe how the declarer worked out to play in that fashion. The full hand

A9764

A3

A1098

J3

KJ5

J8542

53

765

102

Q109

Q2

KQ10984

Q83

K76

KJ764

A2

Trick 1) King hearts Trick 2) Ace diamonds Trick 3) King diamonds Trick 4) Ace hearts

Trick 5) 4sp ----- 2sp -----8Sp ----- Jsp (*opponents win this trick*)

Trick 6) 7 cl ----- Jack clubs -----Q cl ----- Ace clubs

Trick 7) Qsp ----- Ksp -----ASp ----- 10sp and now all the spades are winners

Trick 8) 9sp Trick 9) 7sp *throwing a club* Trick 10) 6Sp *throwing a heart*

Despite the opponents holding KJ5 and 10 2 they were only able to make one trick. NB note that if the declarer had (for instance) led the Qsp at the outset it would have been covered by the K and the declarer would not have been able to avoid losing two spade tricks. The winning play is called an INTRA FINESSE and is the rarest of all the finesses and the last to be "discovered".

The declarer thought along these lines. With A9764-----Q83 the obvious play is to try a Chinese finesse. With this in mind the 4sp was led towards the Q. When the defender to declarer's right played (only) the 2 it occurred to declarer that surely a good defender would not play the 2 if they had the K, they would play the K to make sure they made that trick. The defender was known to be a good defender (*name on request*) and so the declarer decided to believe *her* .. and tried the 8 Sp. When the 8sp lost to the J sp declarer now knew that one chance would be to make the outstanding spade honours (the K + 10) "crash" together. Declarer thus led the Qsp and closed their eyes. As the cards lay there was no way the defenders could prevent declarer from making the remaining tricks.

Stocking filler - Leading is an important part of the game of course and perhaps never more so than against a grand slam. The leader was Anita Sinclair the English International who made the sparkling lead of the 4 clubs. What was the sense in that you might wonder. Well look at it from declarer's point of view. They thought, no one would lead away from a Q of trumps anyway never mind in a grand slam. No the Q is with South. What I will do is win with the 9 Cl in dummy (he did) and lead the 10 clubs. That will win and then I can continue to draw the trumps with no loss even if they are 1----- 4. Best laid plans n all that. At trick two the 10 clubs lost to the leader's now bare Q clubs.