

## Penalty Cards

Penalty cards create strange situations with which both declarer and defenders tend to be rather unfamiliar. This one came up during the Friday evening session.

Board 8. Dealer West. None Vul.

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

West North East South  
2♠ Dble 3♠ Dble  
Pass 4♦ All Pass

Two Spades was weak with five spades a plus a four-card or longer minor and North scraped up an off-shape double largely to get hearts into the game. When East made a pre-emptive spade raise, South in turn scraped up a responsive double. Very often, South would be able to build a four-card heart suit here so North judged to bid his diamonds, where a fit was more likely to exist. That ended the auction and East led a spade, allowing North to see that he was in quite the wrong contract – not that 4♥ would have been a bargain either as the cards lay. Had South been a little stronger, she might have doubled 3♠ but then converted 4♦ to 4♥ to imply hearts and clubs, but with her actual hand she felt that to bid a second time would be just too much.

West won the spade and switched to his heart. North put in the queen, hoping to confuse East, as the heart surely was singleton. That worked nicely as East took the king and switched to the king of clubs. Declarer won the ace and tried a low heart but West was up to that one and ruffed then returned a club. Declarer won the queen and ruffed a spade, led a diamond to his ace and ruffed the last spade. Unfortunately, West over-ruffed and, after that had been corrected, that left him with a penalty card of the ten of diamonds. Declarer could not play a winning heart now as West would ruff with his penalty card, so he tried ruffing a club. Without the penalty card, it would be normal for East to over-ruff and give partner a heart ruff. However, when he over-ruffed in the actual scenario, declarer then required him to lead a trump and the king of diamonds was the last defensive trick, declarer making his last trump and two heart tricks for down two and -100. Had East fully understood the implications of his partner's penalty card, he should have discarded rather than over-ruff. What could declarer then do? If he played a heart, West would ruff, while he could not instead play a trump as, down to the same length as East, he would make no more tricks, East winning, drawing the last trump and playing a spade to his partner.