



at a disadvantage. Everyone who opened the North hand with a weak no trump heard partner use Stayman, responded 2♠ to that, and was raised to 3NT. The automatic diamond lead round to the queen meant that the contract was cold.

Declarer had the option of settling for nine tricks by simply continuing with ace and another diamond towards the jack. Or, he could get greedy, risking the contract in search of an overtrick. The latter approach meant leading the five of hearts at trick two, outing in dummy's nine. No doubt West would return spades and declarer must duck until the third round, throwing the ace and king of clubs from dummy. On winning the third spade, declarer cashes all four clubs, pitching diamonds from the dummy. East is squeezed. His last four cards need to include three hearts and two diamonds, which is of course impossible.

The line that makes the overtrick is not a sure thing - it succeeds when West has one or both heart honours, which is going to happen only about three-quarters of the time, and risks going down when both honours are offside. At Teams, one would always play safe for nine tricks as the size of gain or loss is most important; at Pairs, where the frequency of gain or loss is what counts, the less safe line becomes quite attractive.

At our featured table, North had to open 1♣ and now both opponents got their suits into the game. After a low spade lead, the play turned into a nice battle between declarer and East. The nine of spades won the first trick and East passed the first test when he overtook the spade continuation and cleared the suit, dummy again pitching the ace and king of clubs. This was important - declarer knew that dummy's fourth card in each red suit could become a threat against the defence, so wanted to delay discarding from those suits as long as possible. Declarer's first shot was to lead the eight of diamonds towards dummy's jack. Had East risen with the king, there would have been three diamond winners and nine in all. But East got that one right by playing low and the jack won the trick. Now declarer cashed the clubs, throwing a heart on the third round. Meanwhile, East had thrown one diamond and one heart fairly painlessly. The fourth club caused East a little more stress but he again got the position right - if he throws a second diamond, declarer can throw another heart from dummy then play ace and queen of diamonds to set up dummy's fourth diamond. East threw a heart. There was one last chance. Declarer led the five of hearts and, had East played low, would have risen with the ace and returned a heart to the now bare king, endplaying East to lead into the diamond tenace. But East cleared this final hurdle by putting up the king and the contract was doomed. Declarer won and played a second heart in hopes of finding East with king-queen, but West won the queen and cashed two spades for down one, dummy winning a heart at trick thirteen.