

Not Easy – Brian Senior Schapiro Spring Foursomes 2015

The fourth day of the 2015 EBU Spring Foursomes featured more tough problems in all areas of the game. Take this first deal – how should declarer tackle his 3♥ contract after a club lead to the queen and four of spades switch from East?

Board 9. Dealer North. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
–	–	3♣	Dble
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
All Pass			

Board 26. Dealer East. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
–	–	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the five of hearts to the king and ace and you cash a top diamond then four rounds of spades, pitching a club from hand. East discards the three of hearts and five of clubs. How do you continue?

Board 23. Dealer South. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
—	—	—	2♥
Dble	Pass	3♦(i)	Pass
3♠(ii)	Pass	4♣	Pass
4♠	All	Pass	

- (i) Do you have a heart stopper?
- (ii) I have at least five spades and a good hand

In the match between PENFOLD and GILLIS, both Wests became declarer in 4♠ and both Norths led the singleton heart.

For GILLIS, Boye Brogeland played a spade to the jack at trick two, losing to the king. South made the obvious-looking play of the king of hearts to the ace and ruff, but now North was endplayed. It didn't matter what she did as the seven of spades was an entry to dummy's club winners, so the contract made.

The defence can prevail in a number of ways. Firstly, if South does not give his partner the heart ruff, but instead returns a diamond. Now the defence is OK so long as North does not lazily play three rounds of diamonds expecting partner to over-ruff dummy. Instead, win the diamond, exit with the ten of spades, and sit back and wait for two more diamond tricks. Secondly, even after the heart return, North can refuse to ruff. Now there is no entry to the ace and king of clubs and the defence will eventually come to two diamond tricks (North can be endplayed to avoid the third loser) and a heart.

Should the defenders get this right? It is difficult, but they might ask themselves why declarer led a low spade to the jack rather than playing ace and another, given that he must know there is a danger of running into a heart ruff. That might suggest that he is desperate to get to dummy, implying that he is void in clubs.

At the other table, Roumen Trendafilov, for PENFOLD, led a spade to the seven at trick two. If South did not give his partner a ruff, there would be six trump tricks, two hearts and two clubs, while if North did get a ruff he would be endplayed. A diamond exit gives a trick immediately, while a club allows declarer to ruff out the queen-jack and go back to dummy with the spade jack to cash the long clubs.

OK, time to go back to the two play problems. On the first one, how should declarer tackle his 3♥ contract after a club lead to the queen and four of spades switch from East?

Board 9. Dealer North. E/W Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
–	–	3♣	Dble
Pass	3♦	Pass	3♥
All	Pass		

Declarer rises with the ace of spades at trick two and plays two rounds of hearts, both defenders following. The contract cannot be made on the actual lie of the cards, but is cold if East holds the ten of diamonds. If declarer takes a diamond finesse now, or after drawing the last trump, West can win and exit with a club. Twist and turn as he might, declarer cannot avoid three more losers.

But suppose that declarer ruffs a club before drawing the last trump and running the diamond nine? If the ten is onside, that will force the queen or king and West will be endplayed. Declarer can get out for one diamond and two spades losers, or vice-versa, according to West's choice of poison. It does not benefit the defence for East to cover the diamond if he does have the ten. Removing the defender's safe exit card is an easy play to overlook, and on this occasion proves to be ineffective, but it is something to bear in mind on similar deals in the future.

Board 26. Dealer East. All Vul.

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

West	North	East	South
–	–	Pass	1♦
Pass	1♠	Pass	1NT
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

West leads the five of hearts to the king and ace and you cash a top diamond then four rounds of spades, pitching a club from hand. East discards the three of hearts and five of clubs. How do you continue?

There is no sure solution to this one. If the diamonds are three-three declarer simply takes the diamond finesse then cashes two more diamonds and has his nine. However, that line leads to defeat on the actual deal.

It must be correct to finesse the jack of diamonds after taking the spades, but now there is a winning line despite the four-two split – if only declarer can read the position.

The point is that East has been triple-squeezed on the spades. Not being able to afford a diamond discard, and forced to keep the ace of clubs, he was obliged to throw the long heart. With only three hearts to be lost, declarer can afford to lose a club. If he can read that it was East who began with five hearts, he can win the jack of diamonds then play a club to the jack. That loses to the ace but the defence has only three more tricks to take and the contract is made. How does declarer know to play to the jack of clubs and not the king? If East did not hold the ace of clubs, he could have voided himself of the suit to keep the fifth heart. The only club he must keep is the ace.

Essentially, declarer must decide whether to play for the actual lay-out, or for West to be 4-5-3-1 and East 2-4-3-4.