

261. Comfortable Exit

Playing in a pairs' game against experienced opponents, I hold:

♠ A 10 ♥ A 8 7 5 3 ♦ K Q J ♣ J 10 5

With neither side vulnerable, South, on my right, opens the bidding with **one spade**. My suit isn't what I would like for a two-level overcall but I can't avoid **two hearts**. North thinks momentarily and tries **three hearts**. Partner **doubles** showing a heart raise and South retreats to **three spades**, which ends the auction:

South	West	North	East
1♠	2♥	3♥	Dbf
3♠	All Pass		

I lead the king of diamonds and this is what I see:

♠ K J 3
♥ 6
♦ 8 7 4
♣ A J 7 6 3 2

♠ A 10
♥ A 8 7 5 3
♦ K Q J →♦K
♣ 10 8 5

Preliminary evaluation: A word about the bidding. I am not a fan of North's 3♥ cuebid without a fourth trump. On many hands, the fourth trump makes all the difference. Here North can bid three clubs (forcing) and follow with three spades accurately describing his values and his trump length. Back to the defense, I am looking at four tricks at most, so partner will need to produce something to beat this contract. His double suggests a useful heart; he may also need something in clubs.

Declarer wins the ace of diamond, cashes the king of clubs, and advances the queen of hearts. Is there a case for me to duck? I don't think so. If declarer has the king of hearts, I will lose my ace; if the queen is his top card, as I suspect it is, ducking will subject my ace to a ruffing finesse. So I win the ♥A, and cash the diamonds, which hold up, declarer playing the ♦10 on the third round.

Our main chance is if declarer's distribution is 5=4=3=1. If he has six spades, he can easily establish dummy's clubs; but then he may have bid

game. His cashing the ♣K was a sure sign of a singleton. Assuming the ♦10 was a true card, he started with four hearts. Declarer will need to ruff two of them and throw the other on the ace of clubs. I can lead two rounds of spades at this point, but then declarer can play ruff clubs good and use the other top spade to run clubs.

How about leading hearts without touching spades? Now declarer can ruff in dummy, throw a heart on the ace of clubs, ruff a club in hand, and ruff the last heart in dummy. When the ♠K is played from dummy, I will be forced to win my ♠A and put declarer back in hand. The fall of my ♠10 will be a welcome sight for him.

What about a club? That seems like it might work. Declarer can win in dummy and ruff the clubs good. But he must lead a trump. I will grab my ace and lead a heart. Assuming partner has the king of hearts, declarer will have to ruff in dummy and he can no longer enjoy dummy's clubs because he can't draw East's third spade.

So I lead a club. The play follows predictably. Declarer wins the ♣A and ruffs a club. He leads a spade which I win. Now dummy must ruff my heart exit. The ♠K draws my ♠10 but partner ruffs the club from dummy and declarer is left with a heart loser.

The full deal:

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

Points of interest:

- The traps for West are to try to lead ace and another spade, or to attack dummy's trumps by leading hearts without first playing the ace of spades. The trump lead allows dummy's clubs to be

established and leaves a dummy entry intact. The heart lead allows two heart ruffs in dummy *and* a comfortable exit from the board.