

Week 6

This week we have a hand to defend and it illustrates one of the key counting techniques in defence.

We hold

xx

A9xx

Qxxx

KJx

we hear the bidding go as follows

1s -2c -2s -3s -3nt

We lead a small diamond and dummy is

xxx

KJx

Axx

Q86x

dummy plays low and partner the ten and declarer wins with the king .A low heart is led to the king in dummy followed by a spade from the dummy to the jack in declarer's hand .Next declarer plays a low heart ?

Lets count declarer's tricks on this hand We know 2 diamonds and 1 heart and most probably 5 spades so if we duck the second heart this may well be his 9th trick (declarer must hold the HQ else why would he be leading a heart to the king followed by a second round if 2 tricks were needed from the suit he leads low to the jack).So we determine to win the second heart with the ace and now know we must broach clubs .Partner is marked with the CA here and will also need to hold the ten or nine together with 4 cards in the suit to enable us to take 4 tricks .

So we win and do what ? A low club will go to partner's ten some of the time (and will fail if declarer has the ten and partner A97x)but now in any event we have blocked the club suit. The CK will enable us to continue with the jack but still not take 4 tricks as declarer covers the CJ with the Queen on the second round and partner is end played.The only card which succeeds is the CJ if declarer ducks we then play CK and a club to partner and if he covers the CJ with the queen partner wins returns a low club to our king and we play a third round to his ten (or 9) defeating the contract.

Partner held

Qxx

Txx

JTx

ATxx

The theme this hand illustrates is that in order to defend well it is essential to keep a count of declarer's tricks .We will look at the other key things we need to count in later weeks (the high card points and the distribution)

Week 5

There were a number of high level bidding decisions and defensive issues on the following deal which cropped up in a recent Swiss Teams event .

North

x

Ax

AKQxx

xxxxx

South

xx

KQT9xxxx

xxx

void

West

AQJxx

Jx

x

KQJxx

East

Kxxxx

x

JT9x

Axx

At love all the dealer was south and the bidding typically started at nearly every table in play 4h (4s) 5h (5s)

South passes over 5s since 4h said it all and any further move is up to partner whose hand is unknown here -p-p to North who at some tables passed now ,at others doubled and at a third table bid 6h . A difficult decision in truth since with all your side values in one suit here (diamonds) 5s might be making on a double fit and 6h could also be close .In these tight situations there is a difference playing teams compared to pairs .At pairs you need to get the hand exactly write since if 5s is one off and 6h the same then you probably should double 5s .At teams by contrast where the size of the gain is all important you dont particularly mind if you go one off in 5s in one room and one off in 6h in the other and lose say 4 or 5 imps since you have avoided the big loss if one or other contract comes home .

Where e/w played in 5s the defence typically began DA from North followed by HA and to defeat the contract north now had to deliver a club ruff to partner otherwise 11 tricks were scored .How could north tell what to do ? Playing distributional signals south follows with the D2 suggesting either 3 cards or a singleton which is not easy to read but on the HA south can complete the picture for the defence by following with the H2 a suit preference signal asking north to play the lower ranking suit so a club rather than a diamond since no more hearts or diamonds are cashing and so the distribution of the heart suit is not relevant .

Where N/S did reach 6h the defensive spotlight fell on west's lead which was truly tough and most players who faced the problem opted for the CK which resulted in declarer being able to ruff the spade loser on the board and score 12 tricks .It requires either a trump lead (followed by a second trump) to stop the ruff in dummy or else the singleton diamond to be led as declarer is then unable to negotiate the spade ruff without then running into a diamond ruff and the diamonds breaking 4-1 prevents that suit from being established.