

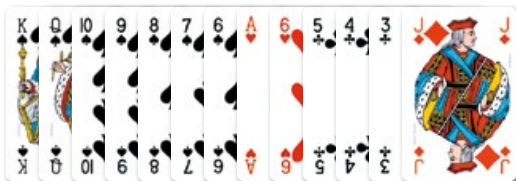
DECLARER  
PLAY  
IMPROVERS

# Achilles' heel

**STAKES** It is very often at trick one that the fate of a contract is decided. So, never let yourself give in to an excess of precipitation at this crucial moment...



Teams. Dealer East. All Vul. Sitting South, you receive the following hand:



East opens 1♦ on your right and you overall 1♠ (considering your hand to good to preempt with 3♠), and you partner raises to game (4♠).

W	N	EAST	S
		1♦	1♠
Pass	4♠		

West leads the Diamond ten and now is the moment to give deep thought about your game plan before calling for the first card from dummy.

♠ AJ542  
♥ 1093  
♦ A4  
♣ K102

N	
W	E
S	

♠ KQ109876  
♥ A6  
♦ J  
♣ 543

**How many winners do you have right now?**

You have nine with seven high Spades and the two red aces. You are one short.

**Can the Club Ace be onside?**

East has opened 1♦, so you can add up high card points and get set: 10 HCP (you) + 12 HCP (North) = 22 HCP. This means there are 18 left for East-West, so it not excluded that West has the Club Ace and East the remaining 14 HCP. Despite that, try to discover a line of play that allows you to win your contract regardless of the location of the cards and against any defense.

**What technique is this deal about?**

We find all the criteria for an elimination and endplay:

- A large number of trumps (12!).
- Side suits that are *a priori* easy to eliminate.
- An exit card towards East, the 10 of Clubs:

♣ K102
■
♣ 543

Once Hearts and Diamonds are eliminated from both hands, you will play the 3 of Clubs from your hand and cover West's card - either with the 10 or the King - in order to endplay East who will be forced to deliver your tenth trick to you on a silver platter.

**What does "against any defense" mean here?**

That the defenders will do their best to spoil your plans. If West can get in with a Heart, he won't hesitate for a moment to play a Club through dummy and kill your possible endplay there and then.

**But how can you protect against it?**

By playing the 4 of Diamonds instead of the Ace on the first trick! East will find himself on lead, unable to play a Club effectively, and you will discard your 6 of

Hearts - your hand's Achilles' heel - on the Ace of Diamonds... An exchange of losers that will make it impossible for West, the dangerous opponent, to get on lead.

**What do you also need to pay attention to?**

To your communications and timing (the order in which you play).

**What are the key moments?**

When East gets in with the Queen of Diamonds and plays a Heart, you jump on it with the Ace. Then you play a small Spade to the Jack and cash the Ace of Diamonds to discard the 6 of Hearts. Now you ruff a Heart, get back to dummy with the Ace of Spades and ruff a second Heart. All is now in place for an endplay against East:

♣ K102
♣ J987
■
♣ AQ6
♣ 543

You play a small Club to the 9, 10 and East's Queen (if West prefers to insert the Jack, you cover with the King for an identical result). Mission accomplished.

	♠ AJ542	
	♥ 1093	
	♦ A4	
	♣ K102	
♠ -	N	♠ 3
♥ K742	W	♥ QJ85
♦ 109853	E	♦ KQ762
♣ J987	S	♣ AQ6
	♠ KQ109876	
	♥ A6	
	♦ J	
	♣ 543	

**The principle**

An "unusual" duck at trick one can be a surefire way to overcome a bad distribution of the opposing cards and a deadly defense from your opponents. It is very spectacular, but above all it is extremely effective in avoiding the loss of a trick to the dangerous opponent.

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