

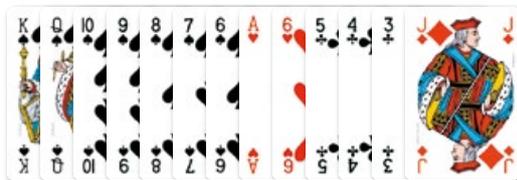
DECLARER
PLAY
IMPROVERS

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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