

Learning Points Defending a Partial for a Top

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by Steve Moese; edited by Mike Purcell

N Deals	♠ 93	← Steve
NS Vul	♥ J973	
	♦ KJ2	
	♣ K763	

February 7, 2008 Thursday Evening Open Pairs game
 Annease & Marvin Comer, Directors, Cincinnati Bridge
 Association. Bridge Center, 2860 Cooper Road, Cincinnati, OH
 45241 (513) 563-2218 <http://www.cincybridge.com>

♠ AKJ75	N	♠ Q86
♥ 1086	W 5 E	♥ AQ4
♦ 7654	S	♦ 108
♣ A		♣ J9854

Defense is where many matchpoints are won. Defending partials is the heart of the game. Can you set 2♠ by West?

My partner Kim is a good beginner to duplicate and found the way to defeat what looks like an ironclad contract by East-West.

♠ 1042	← Kim
♥ K52	
♦ AQ93	
♣ Q102	

The Bidding

Whether playing Standard American, Precision or 2/1 Game Force, the bidding will be similar. Too bad we didn't find East anxious to raise to the 3 level with their 10 support points.

North	East	South	West
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♠	Passed Out	

Defending

A heart or a club opening lead could be right on the auction.

However if dummy (East) holds three trump then leading a trump from the start might be advantageous. Since North has two trumps and opponents are bidding like they have 7 or 8 trumps, North chose to lead a trump. The hope is partner can continue the path if she gets in with a 3rd trump to lead. Yes, there is a risk that we are giving declarer a free finesse in trumps, but then declarer could always figure that out during the play anyway. Besides, a trump lead lets North avoid underleading Kings or starting hearts inappropriately. East figures to have something for the bidding.

The Play

Declarer plays low from dummy on the ♠3 fetching the ♠10 from partner and wins in hand with the ♠J. Next comes the ♦4. This is a bit of a surprise – I suspect declarer is underleading the ♦A to establish a ruff in dummy. North plays the ♦J and returns the last trump. This might or might not be best, but at least declarer will ruff only one ♦ in dummy. Declarer won the ♠ continuation in hand and led a small ♦ toward Dummy's ♦8. Surprise #2. North's first inclination is to rise with my ♦K, but there's no trump to lead. Instead North ducks, hoping not only that partner can win, but that she return her 3rd trump. She does! Declarer wins the 3rd ♠ on the board and returns to hand with the ♣A to take the finesse in ♥. Partner wins the ♥Q with the ♥K and plays ♦ top down. North happily plays the ♦K under the ♦A. We come to a 2nd heart later for down 1 and plus 50 – a top board.

Post Mortem

An opening heart lead would have gained declarer an additional trick in the suit. Allowing declarer to ruff a diamond in dummy would have given declarer the game-going trick. Ducking the 2nd diamond so partner could play a possible 3rd trump was important, and South eliminating East's sentry trump was key to defeating this contract. Way to go partner!