



The World's Smallest Double Dummy Problem

By Mike Lawrence

Thirty years ago, I was reading an old bridge book by Sidney Lenz. Half way through the book, I came upon the following bridge problem. As you can see, it has just three tricks remaining. With so few possible variations, you should solve it in seconds. Right?

Let's see.

South is in a spade contract and he is on lead. He needs two tricks. How can South get them?

This oldie but goodie has caused some eyes to blink.

The answer will appear in a few moments.

Answer coming soon.

Still coming.

Shortly,

Almost there,

Here it is.

With only three cards to consider, it is easy to find the solution. Here is the analysis for each of South's three cards.

The ace of clubs.

You can't lead that. West will ruff and East will be left with another defensive spade trick.

The ace of spades.

You can't lead that either.

If you lead the ace of spades and then the ace of clubs, West ruffs and East takes the last trick with the king of spades.

If you lead the ace of spades and another spade, East gets the last two tricks with his spade and his diamond.

That leaves you with the small spade.

The key is that if West plays low, so does dummy. East wins but is endplayed. A trump lead lets South take the last two tricks and if East leads his diamond instead, South discards his club and ruffs in dummy with the queen.

If West plays his jack, you must cover with dummy's queen. East wins the king but has no safe retort.

IF WEST PLAYS THE JACK, WHY MUST YOU COVER WITH THE QUEEN?

If West plays his jack, you better not duck in dummy. If you do, West wins and leads his ace of hearts. This will promote a trump trick for East-West. I leave you to see why this is so. West's two of spades may end up taking the setting trick.

Hats off to Mr. Lenz for his wonderful creation.