

Dangling Participles

When I was a Junior in high school, I took a class called advanced composition, a class that - along with typing - has proved very useful over the years. Judy V. was in that class, a girl whom I admired from afar. In the semester that she was in my class, we probably did not say anything to each other, except good morning. She probably did not even know my name. Judy V. was tall and gangly, she did not seem to fit into her body or her clothes. When we were discussing sentence structure, someone described her to me as a dangling participle, a sentence in which all of the parts were there, but they were in the wrong order.

However, by the end of our senior year, when I would run into her in the hall, she had put herself together; she was drop dead gorgeous; she could have been a fashion model.

Some bridge hands are like that; they have great potential, but the declarer has to put all of the parts together in the right order, in order to get the best possible result. Two hands, one from the RTD, and one from a recent on-line game, illustrate this point.

From the RTD.

10 9 2
K 5 2
A 4 2
A Q J 10

K Q J 8 5 3
6 3
J 6
6 4 3

WEST.	NORTH.	EAST.	SOUTH.
1 Club	Pass.	1 Heart	2 Spades
Pass.	4 Spades.	All pass	

West leads the queen of hearts. You take stock. You have five spade winners and the Ace of diamonds. Hearts are obviously hopeless. But you have four

potential club winners, all of the building blocks that you need to get to ten tricks. But, to get there, you have to put all things in order, and take club finesses. You need three entries to your hand. If you make the mistake of drawing trump, it becomes impossible.

So you duck the first heart, and the second, and fortunately West plays a third heart. If he had switched to a diamond, you would have been out of luck, but you received a little help. You are in your hand at trick three. TAKE THE CLUB FINESSE, NOW. Trump can wait until later.

It wins, so you come back to your hand with a spade and take a second finesse. It wins again. And now you play a second spade. West wins and plays a diamond. You win, come back to your hand with the third spade, and take the finesse again. Again, it wins. You cash the Ace, and throw your diamond on the good club, making four. The East/West hands were:

A 6 4	7
Q J 10	A 9 8 7 4
K 5 3	Q 10 9 8 7
K 9 8 2	7 5

In order to have all of the parts come together, you had to realize that you might need three finesses and must preserve your entries. Otherwise, your participles will be hanging out to dry.

I played this hand on-line recently.

9 8 5
J 8 5
7 5 4
A K 9 6

A J 3 2
A Q 7
A 10 9
J 7 5

I opened one no trump and everyone passed. West led his fourth best heart, and I won with the queen in my hand, East playing the 10. After the lead, I had five winners. Two hearts, two clubs, and the ace of spades. To have any chance of making this hand, I needed three club tricks. I thought that my best bet was to duck a club, and hope that the suit split, but one other opportunity presented itself. If LHO had the ten of clubs, the dummy's nine would force the queen, and then I could assure three tricks, by playing back to the jack, and then cashing the ace and king in the dummy.

Great plan. However, the 9 lost to the ten, and a heart came back, I ducked, just in case RHO had the king, in which event the dummy's jack would win. It was not to be. LHO won, and played a heart, setting up his suit. I went to dummy in clubs, and the suit split, contract making. But this is match points. I would have liked to make an overtrick and I was in dummy had some small hope in spades. I had the nine, the 8 and the jack. If East had the ten, my cards would force the king or queen, in the West hand. And the best that West could do at that point would be to cash two hearts. If he led a spade after that, I might be able to pick up the suit, depending on the distribution of the cards.

I led the nine from dummy, and East covered with the ten. It would not have helped him to duck. I played the jack. West won the king and cashed two hearts. These were my cards when he played the last heart.

8 5

7 5

K 6

A 10

East had to discard before I did, He did not know the diamond situation. At trick 11, they had never been played. His last cards were

Q 7

K Q

He was afraid that I had the A/J of diamonds, so he threw the 7 of spades. I pitched a diamond. It was all over. Whatever West led, I would get the last two tricks. He led a diamond. I won, cashed the king of spades, dropping East's queen. I then led a spade to the 8, which was good at this point, making two, for a very good score.

On both of these hands, the card combinations were like that dangling participle. All of the parts were there; declarer just had to put them in the correct order.

This hand presents another interesting point. Sometimes it helps to let the other side cash its winners, as the other player cannot always know what to discard. Don't give up, just because you cannot see where another trick might develop. If East had started with the K/Q/J of diamonds, and the queen spades, he would be squeezed and could not avoid losing the last two tricks. If he saved diamonds, my spades would be good, as above, but if he saved spades, when he pitched the Queen and Jack of diamonds, I would throw my last spade and take the last three tricks with the queen Ace of spades, and the A/10 of diamonds.

East's participles were out there dangling, and he could not find the correct order.