

♠ A 7 3

♥ 9 8

♦ A Q 9 7 6

♣ K 8 5

♠ K J 10 6 5 2

♥ A J

♦ K J 3

♣ 6 4

You open 1♠, partner responds 2♦, East bids 2♥, you repeat your spades and partner bids 4♠. Simple enough. West leads the ♥3 fetching the ♥K from East. Plan the play.

You have a heart loser, two possible club losers and a possible spade loser. On the plus side you have a side suit that can provide discards for two of your losers providing you resolve your trump problem.

What is important to realise is that **West** is the danger hand, the hand that can lead a club through dummy's ♣K.

You have to think differently when there is a danger hand. You have to think *avoidance!* You have to direct your finesses into the non-danger hand, East. Furthermore, if you win the ♥A, and East gets in, East can put West in with the ♥Q, defeating your plan. Therefore, the first obligatory play is to duck the ♥K and win the likely heart return.

Now is the time to attack the trump suit, making sure West does not get in. Lead the ♠K and then the ♠J. If West follows low, play low – perhaps losing to ♠Qx in the East hand. No matter. You have ensured the contract. If East has the ♣A and doesn't cash it, he goes to bed with it. If the ♠J holds, you have the rest of the tricks. If West shows out on the second spade, play the ♠A and concede a spade to East, who must cash the ♣A, or lose it.

Bravo, you have made an “avoidance duck” at Trick 1 plus an avoidance finesse at Trick 4!

Note – protecting an unguarded king from a premature attack is often the overriding consideration when planning the play.

This avoidance play is one type of a safety play that happens often in the play of a hand. Preventing a “dangerous” opponent from gaining the lead is important in this case so he is unable to “trap” your king or another example of keeping a dangerous opponent off the lead is where he can give his partner a ruff.

The full deal -

♠ A 7 3

♥ 9 8

♦ A Q 9 7 6

♣ K 8 5

♠ Q 9 8

♥ Q 7 3

♦ 8 4 2

♣ J 9 7 3

♠ 4

♥ K 10 6 5 4 2

♦ 10 5

♣ A Q 10 2

♠ K J 10 6 5 2

♥ A J

♦ K J 3

♣ 6 4