

So near and yet so far!

♠ 9 2	
♥ 8 7 4	
♦ 7 5 3	
♣ A K J 5 3	
♠ 10 7	♠ 8 6
♥ 10 6 5 2	♥ K Q J
♦ 10 9 8 6	♦ J 4 2
♣ Q 10 7	♣ 9 8 6 4 2
♠ A K Q J 5 4 3	
♥ A 9 3	
♦ A K Q	
♣	

West	North	East	South	West leads the ♦10
pass	pass	pass	2♣	
pass	2♦	pass	2♠	
pass	3♣	pass	6♠	

It is a pleasure to feel the adrenaline rush of a great hand. Such a hand is all too rare, the chance of being dealt 23+ HCP is 0.214%. This means you are lucky if you pick up one 23+ HCP hand in every 400 deals. Actually with 11 probable winners in just the South hand it is a great 23 point hand.

The illustrated hand is clearly suitable for a 2♣ bid and the 3♣ response shows a club suit and some honours so even though South feared the club strength might have limited usefulness opposite his club void, he was content to jump to 6♠.

When dummy hit the table it became clear that South's fears were justified. Dummy is a real tease, declarer can reach out and touch those beautiful clubs, but has a problem getting to dummy to use them.

After winning the diamond lead, declarer should lead a small spade toward the ♠9 in dummy. If West holds the ♠10, he will win the trick. After declarer wins the next trick he can lead another small spade to the ♠9. This will enable South to discard his two heart losers on North's club winners. If West does not grab that trick with the ♠10, declarer will play the ♠9 and win all thirteen tricks. You are probably thinking of course West will play the ten, why would he not? Well, by ducking, West may trick declarer into concluding East has the ten and the only hope, therefore, is to play the ♠2 and pray East has a singleton ♠10. (A more likely reason West may not play the ten is his complete surprise, West may play the ♠7 before he realises the ♠10 can actually win the trick, try explaining that duck to partner!)

South will feel a twinge of pain losing a trump trick while holding such a powerful trump powerhouse, however it is necessary play in order to gain an entry to dummy. Declarer's pain would be much greater if East were the defender holding the ♠10, then he will go down two tricks!

If the opening lead by the defence had been a heart, declarer would have faced much poorer prospects. With that lead, declarer must play a top trump and hope the ♠10 is held by one defender as a singleton (only a 12% probability)

Don't have a blind spot when looking at the spots on spot cards, they can often be turned into winners. This is particularly useful when searching for entries.

Type of play: Entry Management

Inspirational Features:

- 1 The ♠9 is the closest card declarer has to an entry in dummy
- 2 Not being willing to accept wasting the ♣A and ♣K
- 3 Two slow losers in hearts (without that the trump play is really silly!)