

UNLUCKY FOR SOME



That's Board 13. It was there this evening to test one's superstitions and liking or otherwise of safety plays! Safety plays are there when there is no apparent danger in taking one...so, you be the judge!

Board 13

North Deals

Both Vul

♠ Q 10 7

♥ A

♦ 10 8 7 6 5

♣ A K 8 5



♠ A K 8 4

♥ K Q 10 8 6 2

♦ A K 9

♣ —

West	North	East	South
<i>you</i>		<i>dummy</i>	
	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♦	All pass

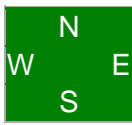
Your auction may have looked something like the above. After partner's reverse, you certainly had interest in some slam and used 4th suit forcing (3♣) to find out more about partner's hand. Partner's belated diamond support made you look at your raggedy suit as the possible trump suit. Key card revealed 0 or 3, obviously the latter, and you then asked for the trump queen and side suit kings with 5♥. However, 6♦ denied that queen...and so there you rested.

North led the ♥4 round to South's 7 and your ace. What now? 6 tables played in 6♦, five times by West on a heart lead and once by East on the ♠5 lead. Views on how to play the hand seemed mixed.

In our so called "vacuum", we lead a trump to the ace, and when no honour appears, cross back with a spade (or maybe a heart had a spade been led initially) and play a second trump to the 9, guarding against North having ♦QJxx. Great textbook reading! You may lose a trick to South but can draw the remaining trump and claim.

Yet, is this that "vacuum"? Had the unbid suit, clubs, been led, the answer would certainly have been "yes". Yet, the lead of the first suit bid by dummy, known to be a strong hand? I would be a little nervy about losing the lead to South too early. Three West players were soon to say a very nasty word within 10 seconds of South scoring their queen on the second round of trumps:

Board 13
 North Deals
 Both Vul

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

West	North	East	South
<i>you</i>		<i>dummy</i>	
	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	2 ♠	Pass
3 ♣	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
4 NT	Pass	5 ♦	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♦	All pass

The heart return defeated their slam. Four West declarers required a defender to hold ♦QJ doubleton and paid a heavy price when only

the ♦2 and 3 appeared on the first round. The declarer in 6♥ was also not amused at the heart break. Only 2 of the West players in 6♦ plus the one East who did not get a heart lead recorded plus scores.

I think the evidence was there that the ♥4 was a dangerous lead and that a couple of high trumps should be played quickly. Unless North is playing a deep double bluff game holding ♦QJxx, I do not think many players on opening lead would choose a low card in opener's first bid suit from a holding of 3 or 4 small cards.

The world of "make believe"

Very comfortably, I blame East, of course, as it is a seat I always avoid! What a silly third diamond to be dealt, the 9. "AK2" please next time..or if you are really looking after partner, what about AKQ!

If only West had been distracted on the opening lead and had put up the HK from dummy, forgetting their own holding. When they woke up, they would realise they would have had to ruff a club and then lay down the top two trumps.

I am the one, though, that is "distracted". Safety plays are fine as long as you are in that vacuum. Unlucky for some, is board 13? Maybe a little but on reflection, those West players who took a second round trump finesse were perhaps not altogether thinking through the consequences of the opening lead.

Richard Solomon