


Tales of Akarana

Difficult to bid: Difficult to defeat

The high card points were evenly split on Board 4. In fact, even though North-South had the majority, it was East-West who were more likely to record a making game. However, the first problem for East-West was to bid to game. It was probable their opponents who had to push them there. Your problem as North is to decide what to do at trick 3 after the following sequence. You are allowed to know, if relevant, that East-West play long suit help asks as game tries:


Board 4	♠ A K Q 9 5		
West Deals	♥ —		
Both Vul	♦ 9 8 6 3		
	♣ K 10 7 2		
			
			♠ 10 7 6 4
			♥ Q 4 2
			♦ 4 2
			♣ A J 4 3
West	North	East	South
	<i>You</i>	<i>Dummy</i>	
1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl
3 ♥	3 ♠	Pass	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	Pass	Dbl
All pass			

The first double is take-out, the second penalties.

You lead two high spades on which both South and West follow. **Over to you.**

South's double of 2♥

Assuming South is not going to pass a reopening double of 2♥ by North, they may as well tell their partner that they are alive and willing to compete with a quarter of the high card points. That will certainly encourage North to compete to 3♠, maybe even 4♣, all of which will encourage West to have a go at game with two nice red suits. Whether or not South now decides to double, the defence needs to be accurate.

Board 4		♠ A K Q 9 5	
West Deals		♥ —	
Both Vul		♦ 9 8 6 3	
		♣ K 10 7 2	
♠ 3 2	♥ A J 10 8 7 5	♠ 10 7 6 4	
♦ K Q J 7	♣ 9	♥ Q 4 2	
		♦ 4 2	
		♣ A J 4 3	
		♠ J 8	
		♥ K 9 6 3	
		♦ A 10 5	
		♣ Q 8 6 5	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♥	Dbl
3 ♥	3 ♠	Pass	Pass
4 ♥	Pass	Pass	X

After two high spades, North will not want to shorten their partner's trumps by leading a third small spade. That defence will not defeat this contract. ♦ 9 exit will not work for the defence either whether South wins or not. If they win, declarer will have two entries to dummy (♣A and ruffing a diamond winner) to play trumps for no loser. If South ducks, declarer can win and play a second high diamond. Dummy's two entries still remain to play trumps successfully.

Thus, to beat 4♥, North must switch to a club which declarer has to win. West could try the ♥Q but as long as South ducks, the contract must fail. West has to then play diamonds and one duck from South is all that is required to defeat the contract.

Why did we mention long suit tries? Well, West did not make one either because they did not have one to make or that they were too weak to make one or as here, a mixture of both!

So, what happened? Three declarers were allowed to play peacefully in a heart partial, twice making 9 and once 10 tricks. One declarer failed in 3♥ and another in 4♥. Three times, 10 tricks were made in hearts, once in 4♥ undoubled, once doubled in game and once doubled in part-score. Meanwhile, a couple of North-Souths did not trust their defence conceding 200 doubled in a black suit game.

It would be much easier for the defence if North could lead a low spade to the jack, to be followed by two further high spades. Alas, short of a peek at partner's hand in advance, that lead is pretty unrealistic! The club switch is not so easy for North to find but necessary if 4♥, doubled or not, is to be beaten.

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