A Game Swing From Orlando

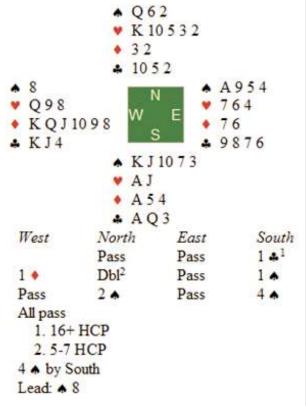
By Robert Thorstad

This hand, played by my partner, Benjamin Kompa, in the Keohane Open Swiss in Orlando, is a fine example of excellent card reading, combined with solid declarer play technique.

The ♠8 lead was won in hand, followed by a low diamond. When the defense returned a diamond, Ben won the ♠A and ruffed a diamond high in dummy, East discarding a discouraging club. West's overcall, ♠8 lead, and East's failure to overruff suggested that East held the ♠9 with length.

Ben backed his analysis by finessing the \$7. When this held, he led another trump to East's ace. East played a club to partner's J, and West returned a diamond, which Ben ruffed.

To make the hand, Ben needed three tricks in hearts. All would be well if West could be trusted to cover the ♥J. But this West was more than capable of ducking, preventing a third heart trick in the dummy.



To counter this possibility, Ben cashed the A and ran all the trumps to reach the following four-card ending with south leading the last spade:

East's hand is irrelevant at this point. What could West discard? The ♣K would establish Ben's ♣Q, so he pitched a ♥. Now the ♥AK dropped West's remaining ♥Q9, establishing dummy's ♥T. Ben took 10 tricks for a well-deserved game swing.

To beat the contract legitimately after a spade lead requires double dummy defense. After winning the first ♦, West has to find a ♥ switch, beginning an attack on declarer's communication with dummy. If declarer wins the ♥AJ and then ruffs a diamond, East overruffs and plays a high trump. This prevents declarer from reaching dummy.

Declarer could instead win just the \P A, but the defense has a simple counter. Upon winning the \triangle A, East plays a second heart to remove dummy's entry to the long \P . The defense finishes with two \triangle tricks, the \triangle A, and a \Diamond for -1.

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