This problem comes from Sally Brock who writes in The Australian each Wednesday. She is a leading British player

Dealer S, Nil Vul

WEST ?	NORTH AQ875 - 873 J10974	EAST ?	
	SOUTH J632 AKQ10 Q9 AK2		
South	West	North	East
2NT	Р	3H	Ρ
4S (1)	Р	Ρ	Ρ

(1) Good Spades

THE PLAY

West played DA and DK. Then he played CQ

How should Declarer read CQ?

ANALYSIS

CQ is surely a Singleton, West hopes East has CA, then back comes a Club for a Ruff, down 1

But Declarer has CA, no chance for a quick Ruff

West must have at least 1 Spade, or he would not play CQ (hoping for the Ruff). With no Spades, even with CQ bare, he would hope Declarer finesses CQ through East later

ANSWER

Declarer cannot take the Trump finesse of SK, as if it loses to East, and West has 2+ Spades, when a Club comes back for a Ruff, down 1

So, simply cash SA (maybe you are lucky enough for SK to fall Singleton – about 10% chance). Then play another Spade. If East wins with SK, then either West follows with a Spade, or is out of them. Either way, West cannot get a Ruff, and you make 4S

These were the full hands:

NORTH AQ875

	873 J10974	
WEST 109 976432 AK52 Q	SOUTH J632 AKO10	EAST K4 J85 J1064 8653
	Q9 AK2	

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[Note that Declarer will go down if Spades break 4-0]

MORAL OF THE STORY

The moral for Declarer? Ask why West played CQ, and modify your play accordingly. Eschewing the SK finesse could sacrifice a Trick (unless SK is Singleton), but guarantees your Contract (unless Spades are 4-0)

Ian Morison

24 May 2024