

BRIDGE NOTES: Falling for - 'Hook line and sinker'

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WEEKEND MAGAZINE (January 05, 2013) : Defence in Bridge has many facets. From the killing opening lead to a trump promotion, from an endplay to a deception. But likewise, declarer's play too has a lot of gadgets and techniques. Amongst them, the deceptive play is the most rewarding. Sometimes in the course of play, as and when the distribution and placement of key cards become visible, the declarer synchronises his moves along with it, sometimes sticking with the original and at times changing course. Today's illustration is a brilliant declarer play in deception, where the declarer as a last resort turns to bluff the defenders so that his distribution along with his weak spots remain hidden from them. This bluff technique is not easy by any means for a sharp defender would not be lured into it that easily. This requires proper timing and the right moment for executing it in a smooth manner whereby the defenders are caught unaware and walk right into the trap. In today's illustration, the declarer who was a French Champion, resorted to this technique very early in the play and in a very cunning manner hoodwinked the defenders to enable him to succeed in an almost impossible contract of 3NT in which he was put by his partner on the following deal: The bidding was of no revelation for the defenders, south's 1NT being raised to 3NT by north. Luckily, or so it seemed, the declarer did not get the killing heart lead, which of course would have given him no chance whatsoever. As you can see from the east west hands, the defenders are taking 3 heart winners straightaway besides the AK of clubs and the Q of diamonds for 2 down for the declarer. At most the declarer can have 3 diamond tricks with 3 spades and the ace of hearts coming to 7 tricks. It is obvious that without the clubs running declarer has no earthly chance of making 3NT. So he was a little relieved when he saw the dummy with JD and the opening lead that was the 5D, 4th best from west's 5 carder suit. Place yourself in the south seat and plan your contract. What can you do if you have got an extra diamond trick, straight away? The key lies with the club suit and when you play the first club, west will win with his singleton ace and obviously shift to a heart as he knows even if one of the spade honours (possibly the king) lies with his partner which would not prevent declarer from knocking the other club honour and still retain control of the hand on a diamond or heart return enabling him to score 4 club tricks besides 3 diamonds and the 2 side suit aces. Of course with the natural heart shift, declarer would stand no chance yielding 3 hearts and 2 clubs. It is in such tight situations that an expert rises to the occasion by pulling rabbits from his hat. The French Champion Pilon made 3NT. Can you see how? Yes by deception of the highest order. He played JD from dummy on the 5D opening lead and played his KD on it deliberately to bluff the opponents into thinking that he held AK bare. And why the JD? To double bluff as if, had QD covered JD, his KD would be natural, disguising his holding. The trap was set. When he now played the club to the ace, west thought he had the declarer by the crunch if he knocked his bare ace of diamonds out which meant that when his partner would come with either the club honour or spade king, he would have a diamond to return to sink the contract. The confident return of diamond by west gave declarer the breathing space to knock the second club honour out and make 3NT - all because of the double bluff, with the defenders falling for 'hook, line and sinker'.

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===== North West East South
===== AQ7 932 10865 KJ4 753 K842
QJ109 A6 J4 Q10853 76 AK92 Q10752 A K96 J843
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