For Better or Worse • Lynn Johnston



Hagar the Horrible • Chris Browne



Blondie • Chic Young



Beetle Bailey • Mort Walker



Zits • Jim Borgman & Jerry Scott



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Bridge



Luck Is a Friendly Enemy

The best approach to the play of a hand is to rely on luck as little as possible. For example, take this deal where West led a diamond against three notrump. Declarer won with the jack and finessed the ten of spades, everyone following low. He then led the five of spades and finessed the jack, losing to East's king.

Back came the ten of clubs, won by declarer with the queen, but South had already run out of steam. His only winners were four diamonds, two clubs, a spade and a heart, and he finished down one.

It is granted that East made a fine play by ducking the ten of spades. Had he taken the ten with the king, declarer would have made at least four notrump.

But the fact remains that South should have made the contract anyway. The best line of play is to overtake the ten of spades with dummy's jack at trick two. Let's assume that East ducks; otherwise, it's all over but the shouting.

Declarer next leads a club from dummy and finesses the queen. As it happens, the finesse wins, and South has his ninth trick. Naturally, he then eschews a second spade finesse, since that could cost him the contract. And so, by following the suggested line of play, declarer winds up with 12 tricks.

What is the advantage of playing this way? The answer is that it gives South two chances instead of just one to make the contract: if West was dealt the king of spades or if East was dealt the king of clubs. If the club finesse loses, South still has another spade finesse to fall back on. By playing in this way, he minimizes the element of luck.

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| South V | Vest | North | East |
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| <u> </u> | 1 . | C 1 1 | |

Opening lead — ten of clubs.

The Disappearing Trick

It is a basic principle of play that when a contract can be made only if the opponents' cards are divided in a certain way, declarer should assume that that distribution exists and proceed accordingly.

Take this case where West leads a club against six

Sally Forth • Greg Howard



Sally Forth • Greg Howard







MANNER?

SCOTTON BREEM

Cryptoquip

| SDL YTBECLEQ ZFXGAEK | JG P XZBV LZHV TZBLQA |
|--|---|
| EYBFP ETPGXESX LRB | SPYZ ZHTUQLJXZL, |
| KGND PB ZEND XZEKK KEAD | LEQIUYA'O VQI BZGZB OQ |
| Z E P X : "R D K K B C B G K Q !" Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF SOMEONE WERE A WORLD-FAMOUS MINERALOGIST, I GUESS FOLKS MIGHT CALL HIM A ROCK STAR. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals L | E Z B P L P W Q S W L E Z U U ? Yesterday's Cryptoquip: NEW BROADWAY MUSICAL ABOUT ARTISANS WHO LIKE TO MAKE SMALL LACE MATS: "HELLO DOILY!" Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals A |

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Family Circus • Bill Keane



"If we were home-schooled, it would be good for our backs.'

hearts. When dummy appears, declarer sees that the slam essentially depends on whether or not he can avoid losing a trump trick.

There is no good reason not to tackle trumps right away, so South wins the club with the ace, leads a low heart to the ace and a heart back. When East shows out, South takes the king and must now solve the problem of how to avoid losing a spade trick.

The task looks impossible, but if South applies the aforementioned principle, he can get home safely. He starts by leading a club to the king, ruffs a club, then cashes the A-K of spades and his three diamond tricks. All these preliminary maneuvers are geared to the hope of finding West with a singleton or doubleton spade, in which case the slam can be made. As it happens, this hope materializes, because the position after the first 10 tricks have been played is:

| North | |
|------------------|------------------|
| Н76 | |
| West | East |
| ΗQ | SQJ |
| D 9 | CQ |
| C 9 | - |
| South | |
| S 9 | |
| Н Ј 9 | |
| When declarer no | w leads a trump, |
| | |

putting West on lead, South's spade loser vanishes into thin air. Tomorrow: Strike while the iron is hot. (c)2005 King Features Syndicate Inc.



"Since vegetables are good for you, could I have some popcorn?'