

August 29, 2020

Bridge with Richard Ward

There are more than fifty bridge clubs in Queensland and approximately half of those have developed a Covid-19 plan to allow them to return to limited face-to-face bridge whilst maintaining the required level of social distancing and hand sanitising. Meanwhile, the online options such as StepBridge, FunBridge, Bridge Base Online, SmartBridge and Real Deal Bridge are thriving.

NORTH		
♠ 8 3		S/ ALL VUL
♥ 3 2		
♦ 8 7 6 5 3		
♣ A K 7 4		
WEST		EAST
♠ Q 7 5		♠ 6 2
♥ K 8 7 5		♥ A J 10 9
♦ Q J 10 2		♦ 9 4
♣ Q 10		♣ J 9 5 3 2
SOUTH		
♠ A K J 10 9 4		
♥ Q 6 4		
♦ A K		
♣ 8 6		

Just about every team in this event had no trouble reaching 4S after South showed 16+ points and a 6-card suit. West led the queen of diamonds and declarer could count nine certain tricks – five spades, two diamonds and two clubs – barring any early minor suit ruffs. Many looked no further than the spade finesse for their tenth trick, cashing the ace of spades first in case of a singleton queen anywhere and then crossing to the ace of clubs to lead towards the jack of spades. This is a 50 percent line but, in the fulness of time, the defence made three heart tricks and a spade to defeat the contract.

There are two other possible lines of play to consider. One is to play for a 3-3 break in diamonds, but this has only a 36 percent chance of success and would fail when, not surprisingly, they break 4-2. The other is to try to ruff the heart loser. The defenders will see this coming and may try to lead two rounds of trumps to prevent the ruff but there is a way to stop them. Take the ace of diamonds then cross to dummy with a club and lead a heart. East will win the ace and lead a spade. Take the ace, cross back to dummy and lead a second heart covering East's card so that West wins the trick. On the given layout, he cannot lead a second spade without giving up a trick and so the game will make.
