

Playing Out of the Rough

TO THE EDITOR:

Someone who bids outside the usual norms must be prepared to handle unusual contracts. To experience what that feels like, consider how you would try to succeed here:

Imps

South dealer

Both sides vulnerable

NORTH
 ♠ 6
 ♥ A K Q 4
 ♦ A Q 7 5 2
 ♣ A J 5

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q J 8 7
 ♥ 9 8 7 6 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 9 7

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	(All Pass)

Okay, perhaps unusual is too gentle a characterization of South's opening.

Diamond jack, *queen*, four, three.
 Spade six, deuce, queen, *ace*.
 Club three, ?

What is your plan?

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NORTH
 ♠ 6
 ♥ A K Q 4
 ♦ A Q 7 5 2
 ♣ A J 5

WEST
 ♠ A 10 9 5 3
 ♥ 5
 ♦ K J 10 9
 ♣ Q 4 3

EAST
 ♠ 4 2
 ♥ J 10 2
 ♦ 8 6 4
 ♣ K 10 8 6 2

SOUTH
 ♠ K Q J 8 7
 ♥ 9 8 7 6 3
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 9 7

At the table, declarer won with dummy's ace of clubs, discarded his remaining club on the diamond ace, and saw that there was a clear path to the finish line if trumps were four-three: ruff a club, cash two trumps, then (unless the ten and nine of spades both dropped, in which case draw the last trump and claim) play hearts. The flaw in that approach is that it will fail if spades are five-two. Instead, South continued with the top hearts. West ruffed the second and tapped declarer, but that was insufficient. South cashed two high spades and reverted to hearts, limiting West to one further trump trick.

Your plan should have featured that basic approach. If hearts split two-two, solid defense will prevail if trumps are five-one. If West discards twice on hearts, things can get complicated: Declarer might need to decide whether to play for five=two or four=three spades. However, that hasn't happened yet, so it should not affect your basic plan.

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