

The Class of 76 or The Seres noose by Derrick Browne

Each year, an award is issued for the Hand of the Year. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Bols liquor company also gave a Brilliancy Prize. The first ever awarded at a World Championship was in 1976, to Ron Klinger. That same year, the Hand of the Year award was also won by an Australian, the late Tim Seres. You will have to wait for Klinger's brilliancy, but today's column features the Seres hand.

Dealer East, nil vul.

NORTH
S 974
H A62
D KQT4
C QT4

WEST
S T53
H QT73
D J92
C 975

EAST
S AJ
H K94
D 8753
C A862

SOUTH
S KQ862
H J85
D A6
C KJ3

WEST NORTH EAST SOUTH

		Seres	
		1C	1S
Pass	2S	Pass	4S
All pass			

Against South's 4S contract, West led the C7, won by Seres with the CA. How should East plan the defence?

Seres figured that a switch to hearts was needed. The normal heart to lead from K-9-4 is the low one; West would cover South's card, driving out the ace. Declarer, staring at two obvious heart losers, would then have cashed three top diamonds for a quick heart discard.

Seres realised, however, that a deceptive play could help on a layout such as the actual one – and accordingly, he led the HK. This “promises” the HQ, so declarer figured his HJ would be a winner and there was no need to seek a heart discard. Therefore after winning the HA, he led a spade from dummy.

To quote Denis Howard from his article on this hand, in the *Nation Review*: “The raptorial Seres pounced on the spade and laid H9 on the table. Declarer had barely time to murmur *moriturus te saluto* before West had wrapped up two heart tricks. Declarer, numbed to further pain, sat quietly while West then played the thirteenth heart. East hit that with SJ (known in the trade as an uppercut) and S10 became: a trick in West's hand. Two down in an ice-cold contract, but who would blame declarer.”

Besides the Brilliancy Prizes, Bols also sponsored an annual series of bridge tips. Fittingly, the Bols tip from Seres was titled: “Give declarer enough rope”, where he advised the reader “to develop the knack of giving an opponent the chance to go wrong”. By way of example, he offered this hand from a top pairs event:

NORTH
S AKQ4
H QT7
D 765
C 842

WEST
S 873
H 8643
D T9
C J975

EAST
S JT5
H AJ9
D QJ832
C QT

SOUTH
S 962
H K52
D AK4
C AK63

South was declarer in 3NT. It seems there are nine easy tricks: two in each minor, one in hearts (by driving out the ace), and four in spades (they divide evenly, so the S4 wins the fourth round). After winning the diamond lead, declarer tested the spades. On the ace and king, East dropped the SJ and S10! Declarer assumed the suit was 4-2, and played the S4 over to the S9, which was now a winner. He then led the HK, trying to force a heart entry to dummy, but East ducked, and the contract went one down.