

Defence of the Year by *Derrick Browne*

The International Bridge Press Association Awards 2009 were announced at the world championships in September. This was voted the best defence:

Dealer East, both vul.

NORTH  
S J874  
H A5  
D AJ  
C AQT74

WEST  
S K95  
H JT94  
D 9543  
C 86

EAST  
S 32  
H K762  
D QT87  
C K93

SOUTH  
S AQT6  
H Q83  
D K62  
C J52

South opened a weak notrump. North bid 2C Stayman, South bid 2S, and North raised to game.

West led the HJ, won by East, Michelle Brunner, with the HK. Looking at the North hand as dummy, how should East proceed?

The defence has scored one trick (the HK) and the CK should win later. South is marked with at least 12 HCP, North has 16 HCP and East has 8 HCP. West has already shown up with a jack so must have at most another 3 HCP. Is there any hope of scoring two more tricks, to defeat this contract?

Brunner imagined that West might have the SK, a third trick for the defence. If he also had a doubleton club, there might be a chance of a club ruff, too. Brunner now had a plan. She led the most unlikely of cards, the C9.

From declarer's perspective, this seemed an obvious singleton. After winning in dummy, South called for a spade and banged down the SA then another spade to cut down the chance of a ruff. West won the SK and led a club, low from dummy. Declarer expected this to be ruffed but instead East won with the CK and returned a club and it was West who ruffed, for one down.

Thomas Bessis of France won the Junior Deal of the Year award for this defence: :

Dealer North, EW vul.

NORTH  
S AQ643  
H J9542  
D QT4  
C —

WEST  
S 52  
H A4  
D AK53  
C A7642

EAST  
S J9  
H KQ876  
D 9872  
C T3

SOUTH  
S KT87  
H T  
D J6  
C KQJ985

North showed spades and hearts and finished declaring 4S. East led the D8 and West cashed two diamond tricks.

It seems declarer will make this contract – the CK will later be led and if West covers declarer ruffs, otherwise discards (ruffing finesse). But West, Bessis, led the C7! Declarer figured East must have the CA so ruffed and then gave up a heart in preparation for a cross-ruff, but ended up two down.

How did Bessis know the clubs were not divided 1-1 between declarer and East (in which case leading away from his ace would concede a trick)? He figured his partner would have led the club with a singleton.