03/01/11 Stratified 0-20 & 20+

Board 24
North Deals
None Vul

 vulnerables

[Hands rotated CW]

West  North  East  South
James  Barry  Steve  Pete
Pass    2  ♠️  2  ♦️
3  ♠️  4  ♦️  All pass

4  ♠️ by South

Misplay this hand with me...

James led the  ♣️ 2, won by Steve with the ace. From this I deduced the actual diamond holding. I ruffed the diamond return. When James did not unblock the  ♣️ K, I decided to try to use this to my advantage, without having a full plan in mind. Figuring James had the  ♠️ A, but uncertain about the  ♠️ K, I lead the  ♠️ K, which James won (see below). When James led the  ♠️ K, I discarded my spade (an error), to retain control in the face of a possible 4-1 heart split. James shifted to a spade, won by the ace.

At this point, I can still make the contract: two top clubs and a club ruff with the  ♠️ 9, draw trumps (dropping the J in its known location). Instead, I played for trumps to be 4-1, which gives me no chance to make the contract. Besides, if James had  ♠️ A87, I'd probably have been doubled. (I tried to ruff a club low to preserve the  ♠️ 9, overruff, ... down 3).

It really helps to have a plan before starting to play cards. A 3-2 trump split is actually likely, once Steve proves to have only five diamonds. I could have ruffed the  ♣️ K and played as noted above to make the contract. If truly greedy, I could have made an overtrick by finessing in spades. Even if I had a second trump loser, I would have the spade finesse in reserve.

The double dummy solver says I can always be held to four - how? James must duck the  ♥️ K, a counter-intuitive play. Then leading another another trump fails, since I would no longer have a re-entry in trumps to draw the last trump, after ruffing the club. So I switch to clubs and ruff out the suit, but James can win the  ♥️ A and give Steve a ruff on the fourth round of clubs.

- Pete Matthews