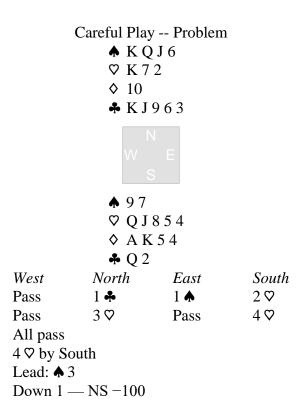
**Board 12**West Deals
N-S Vul



Lou Kelleher and I played the most amazing session together. I held an average of 11 high card points per hand. While that is unusual, Lou averaged 12.2 HCP! I had my bidding shoes on and declared 14 hands; Lou played 5 and the opponents 5 (making only one contract).

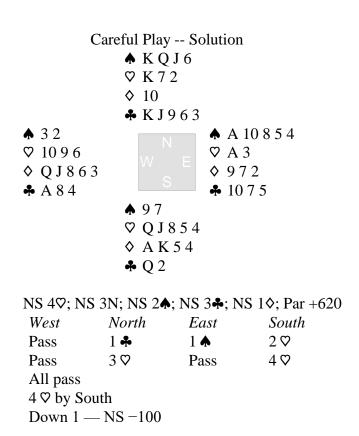
Getting good cards is a particular advantage for a good declarer in a mixed field such as a club game. Mostly I took advantage of this good fortune, but I took a nap on this deal. See if you can do better.

West leads the  $\spadesuit$  3, and East captures the king with the ace. East returns the  $\spadesuit$  8, West following with the  $\spadesuit$  2.

Plan the play before proceeding.

Suppose you overtake the  $\spadesuit$  9 in dummy to lead a trump. Both opponents play small trumps, and your queen wins. What now?

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Care is required to prevent West from getting a trump promotion. I forgot the bidding, and won the easy  $\spadesuit 9$  in hand. It was no longer possible to make the contract. East won my  $\heartsuit Q$  lead and produced a spade. I woke up and gave it my best shot, discarding the  $\clubsuit Q$  as East ruffed. West exited safely with the DQ, fearful that the  $\clubsuit A$  would not cash.

A trump to dummy's king drew the remaining trumps. Now for my last chance, I led the \* K and let it ride, dumping a diamond loser. Down 1 (the other small diamond gets ruffed).

The winning play is to win that spade on dummy at trick two, and lead the  $\heartsuit$  2. If East pops up with the ace and leads a spade, now declarer can afford to ruff high. Because the  $\clubsuit$  A is with West, East never gets to lead a fourth round of spades.

Care is still required: the third club must be established while the  $\nabla$  K remains on dummy as an entry.

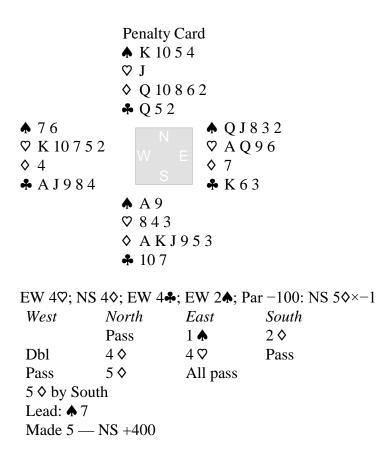
If East ducks the first trump, the play is trickier still. The contract can always be set if the  $\heartsuit$  K is not an entry to the established club and spade winners.

West, looking for a ruff, would only duck the  $\heartsuit$  A from three cards. If that is the case, leading another trump should be fatal, as West can win and lead a third round before the club is established. Furthermore, that means East has the  $\clubsuit$  A, an entry for the trump promotion, if declarer attacks clubs first.

The only play that can work is the one that does: play a small heart from both hands at trick four, felling the ace, and preserving both a high trump in hand (to ruff the spade return) and an entry to dummy.

Had I played correctly to the second trick, would I have found this play to make the contract? Maybe. Did you?





Contemplating the opening lead of the  $\clubsuit$  7, I saw three top losers: one heart and two clubs. Dummy followed with the 4, East with an honor, and I won the ace. The  $\diamondsuit$  A drew the outstanding trumps. With little of any significance to do, I led the  $\clubsuit$  9. West played the  $\clubsuit$  8 on this - a signal - but a round too early. This play was corrected to the  $\clubsuit$  6, the  $\clubsuit$  8 remaining on the table as a major penalty card.

This gave me the chance to wager an extra 50-point undertrick against the chance East would hold the  $\nabla$  A and give me the contract. I called for a small spade from dummy, and, when East won the trick, called the director.

Now, I know my options in this situation, but no way I was going to explain anything here. The director explained my options and I chose that East not lead a club. The director carefully and correctly explained that East must not lead a club *as long as she held the lead*.

East led the ♥ A, and the hand was over. She said, "now may I lead a club?" I could not hold onto an emphatic "no!" Both my losing clubs went on dummy's spade winners. East is in a tough spot, but has to lead a small heart to set the contract.

Should I have taken advantage of these folks? Definitely. Mistakes of all kinds are part of the game.