

A dummy reversal on a 7-2 fit

John Beasley, September 2011, minor revision and added note August 2015

Although I have never been a serious bridge player, I have always had an interest in the game, and over the years I have constructed three “extreme task” deals: three no trumps from any side against any defence, a hand bid more or less plausibly to seven no trumps redoubled and going thirteen down with honours to the defence, and a dummy reversal on a 7-2 fit. The first two are in *51 flights*, but I omitted the third on the grounds that it had almost certainly been discovered before (as with many extreme tasks, once the idea has been conceived its realisation is not difficult). However, in the course of correspondence, Bob van de Velde said that he thought it was new, and he offered to publish it in the Dutch bridge magazine *IMP*. I have mislaid the complimentary copy which he sent me and what follows has been reconstructed from the final e-mail between us, but I think the essentials are correct (Bob made some suggestions regarding details and bidding which I was very happy to adopt).

North-South vulnerable, dealer South.

| | | | | |
|---|----------|---------------|---|-----------|
| | S | A Q | | |
| | H | 5 4 3 2 | | |
| | D | A K 5 4 | | |
| | C | A K 6 | | |
| S | K J 10 | | S | 9 |
| H | A K 10 9 | | H | Q J 8 7 6 |
| D | Q J 10 9 | | D | 8 7 6 |
| C | Q J | | C | 10 9 8 7 |
| | S | 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 | | |
| | H | – | | |
| | D | 3 2 | | |
| | C | 5 4 3 2 | | |

South passes, West opens One Heart, and North says Double: not ideal with four small hearts and only two spades, but what else do you do? East raises defensively to Three Hearts, South, who has limited his hand by his initial pass and cannot see himself having more than one bid, uses it to bid Four Spades which he thinks he can probably make, North, having undisclosed strength and placing partner with at most one heart, reckons that Six Spades is a reasonable gamble, and West cannot resist the temptation to Double.

On the lie of the cards, it looks as though South should be two down. The defenders have a certain trump trick, the third club is another certain loser, and if declarer uses one of dummy’s high trumps to ruff the fourth club the defenders will make another trump trick. However, after the natural lead of a top heart, declarer, assuming from West’s double that he has at least one trump trick, might reasonably decide to forego the normal best-chance line (to play for West to have a doubleton king of spades and clubs to be 3-3) and to go for the only other possibility: heart ruff, trump finesse, heart ruff, diamond to the ace, heart ruff, diamond to the king, heart ruff, club to the ace, diamond ruff, club to the king, diamond ruff, and the ace of trumps is still to come. The third club is indeed a loser, but West’s second trump swallows his partner’s winner; the ace of trumps does indeed “ruff” the fourth club, but West’s third trump, far from being promoted, has to be played to the same trick.

Bob and I agreed that S. J. Simon would not have doubled.

My original version was a simple demonstration of the mechanism, making no attempt to explain why declarer should forego the normal best-chance line and leaving the construction of a plausible bidding sequence as an exercise for the reader. Bob suggested some changes which met both these points, resulting in the version given above. Because he was the editor of the column in which it appeared, he made no mention of his contribution, but it would be quite improper for me not to acknowledge it here. We may note that leading a heart, although the natural thing to do, is the only way to concede the contract; declarer needs six ruffs in hand, and unless the opening lead provides one of them he will be a trick short.

Note added August 2015. On recently rereading some of my *Menagerie* books, I came across the hand on pages 85-87 of *You Need Never Lose at Bridge* (1983):

| | | |
|-------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | S A Q | |
| | H A K 2 | |
| | D A K 6 | |
| | C J 6 5 4 2 | |
| S K 9 8 | | S - |
| H 9 7 | | H Q J 10 8 6 |
| D 9 8 7 | | D Q J 10 5 4 |
| C K Q 8 7 3 | | C A 10 9 |
| | S J 10 7 6 5 4 3 2 | |
| | H 5 4 3 | |
| | D 3 2 | |
| | C - | |

The Walrus, North, opened 2NT and raised the Hog's Three Spades to Four, and the Hog, no doubt thinking of a bottle of vintage champagne which was on offer to the player with the best slam record during the evening, went to Six.

West led the king of clubs, South ruffed and finessed successfully in trumps, but East showed out. No matter: another club ruff, diamond to the ace, third club ruff, diamond to the king, fourth club ruff (East showing out again), heart to the ace, diamond ruff, heart to the king, leading to this with the lead in dummy:

| | | |
|-------|--------|-------|
| | S A | |
| | H 2 | |
| | D - | |
| | C 2 | |
| S K 9 | | S - |
| H - | | H Q J |
| D - | | D Q |
| C Q | | C - |
| | S J 10 | |
| | H 3 | |
| | D - | |
| | C - | |

The Hog now threw East in with a heart, and won the last two tricks by a smother play.

However, this spectacular finish was quite unnecessary; all declarer had to do to make the two tricks needed from the second diagram position was to ruff another club. Furthermore, this would have worked even if declarer had started with only seven trumps and was now down to jack or ten bare. So if, in the opening diagram, we move one spade from South to East and one heart in the opposite direction, we have another deal requiring a dummy reversal on a 7-2 fit. True, some further fiddling is needed to produce a deal yielding a plausible bidding sequence – even the Hog is hardly going to bid Six opposite an opening 2NT on the strength of seven puny trumps and a Yarborough, however much champagne may be on offer – but I am sure it can be done.

I don't know if this possibility was pointed out at the time.