

## THE ADVENTURES OF BORIS THE IMPROVER

### Coping with a bad break

Declarer should plan how the hand is to be played as soon as dummy goes down. Bidding can help work out the most likely distribution but is no guarantee that declarer will not get a nasty surprise during actual play. Failure to adapt to a bad break can be disastrous. This hand was played on Monday the 26<sup>th</sup> March. It was board 3 and nobody at our club made 4 hearts.

North/Lou

♠ K Q T 2

♥ J 8 5 3

♦ 5

♣ A 9 6 3

West/Jodie

♠ J 9 8 7 6

♥ Void

♦ K 9 7 2

♣ Q J T 7

East/George

♠ 4

♥ Q 9 7 4 2

♦ Q J T 4

♣ K 5 2

♠ A 5 3

♥ A K T 6

♦ A 8 6 3

♣ 8 4

South/Boris

Boris was late getting to the table and failed to sort his cards properly. He opened one heart because he thought he had five. Jodie bid one spade, Lou bid three hearts, George passed and Boris bid four hearts. This became the final contract. The 2 of diamonds was led.

Boris realised by then that he only had four hearts but it didn't really matter. Lou would have doubled to show a four-card heart suit and game in hearts would still have been bid. No spade losers, one likely heart loser, no diamond losers and one club loser. It looked promising.

Boris won the opening lead with the Ace of diamonds and trumped the 3 of diamonds in dummy. He next played the 5 of hearts to his Ace. He was less than impressed when Jodie discarded the 7 of spades and George looked rather pleased. When there are five cards out in a suit they are usually distributed 3-2. Finding they are 5-0 instead can cause problems.

Boris had to rapidly think out a new plan but knew he still had to trump three diamonds in dummy. He trumped the 6 with dummy's 8 of hearts and led back a spade to his Ace. On the bidding Jodie had five spades so George should only have one. Boris led the 8 of diamonds and trumped it with the Jack of hearts. When George followed suit Boris had a complete count of his hand. One spade, five hearts, four diamonds, leaving three clubs to make up the number.

At trick seven Boris led a small club. George put up his King and reluctant to lead a heart comes back a club. Boris won the trick with the Ace in dummy and led another club to ruff with his 6 of hearts. By this stage George has four hearts and Boris has only two. He makes both of them by leading a spade. George is forced to ruff and then lead a heart. Boris wins with the Ten, cashes the King and lets George win the last spade trick with the Queen of hearts.

### Helpful hints - on defence.

This hand was not played at the club. I made it up to illustrate how important it is for defenders to work together.

Agatha/Dummy

♠ Q 5 3  
♥ K 6 5 3  
♦ A J T  
♣ K 8 7

Tabitha

♠ J 6  
♥ Q J T 7 2  
♦ K 7 3  
♣ A 5 2

Boris

♠ T 9 8 4  
♥ A 9  
♦ 9 8 4 2  
♣ 9 6 4

♠ A K 7 2  
♥ 8 4  
♦ Q 6 5  
♣ Q J T 3

Felicity/Declarer

Felicity was dealer and opened one no trump. Tabitha bid two hearts, Agatha bid three no trump and Boris passed. This was the final contract. Tabitha led the Queen of hearts. Felicity played small from dummy and Boris won the trick with his Ace. He immediately led back the 9 of hearts. Felicity played the 4 on the first round and the 8 on the second.

Tabitha was confused by her partner's play. Why did he overtake the Queen of hearts with the Ace when it was winning the trick? She appreciated Boris's advice on not cashing Aces at trick one because you needed them as entries but this play went against that policy. She nearly played the 2 of hearts but decided to have a think about it first. She was starting to have doubts. Is Boris as good as he thinks he is?

The word doubt triggered a response in Tabitha's brain. She remembered one of Boris's favoured sayings;

***When in doubt count. When not in doubt count anyway, it's good practice.***

Tabitha had had started with five hearts and could see four in dummy. To make up the thirteen Boris and Felicity had four between them and had just played two each. If Boris and dummy had three hearts each his Ace would have waited for the King. He was forced to play the Ace first so that the attack on the heart suit could continue into the third round. Felicity will not take the 9 of hearts with the king because she wants Boris on lead as he has no hearts left.

Tabitha overtook the 9 of hearts with the ten. Felicity ducked in dummy but took the Jack of hearts at trick three with the King. She can't make the contract without club tricks and when Tabitha gets in with her Ace she makes the 7 and 2 of hearts and defeats the contract. Blocking and unblocking is an important part of both Declarer and Defensive play.

Brian Spendelow.