

Dummy

♠AJ105

♥J3

♦QJ54

♣854

You

♠KQ843

♥A2

♦AK8

♣AQ3

You find yourself in 6 spades. The opening lead is the K of hearts. Looking at the two hands, you note that you have one heart loser and potentially two club losers. You can pitch one of those losers on the 4th diamond, but it still looks like the contract depends on the club finesse. However, there is a line of play that guarantees the contract even if the club finesse loses. What is it?

Send your answers to me: billpuzzles@bridgesights.com

The Answer

Draw trumps. Play 4 rounds of diamonds discarding a club. Then play the J of hearts; LHO will win the trick (because he led the K from KQ). This leaves the following position:

Dummy

♠5

♥

♦

♣854

You

♠KQ

♥

♦

♣AQ

LHO is stuck. If he leads a club, you are guaranteed to win both the A and Q. If he leads a red suit, you can trump in dummy and discard the Q of clubs.

This technique is known as a “strip and end play” and occurs quite frequently. The idea is to strip the defenders of all safe exits and throw them in, forcing them to either give you a guaranteed finesse, or a ruff and discard.

Even on hands where the end play is not guaranteed, it is often a good idea to strip away safe exits from the opponents before throwing them in (by cashing winners and ruffing losers). This makes it harder for them to defend, and they will often make a favorable lead.

I suggest you add this to your arsenal of declarer play techniques.