

Dummy

♠K10743

♥AKJ765

♦

♣87

You

♠QJ8652

♥842

♦AK6

♣A

Your partner and you have an expert auction such that you arrive at 6 spades holding only 25 HCP between you. The opponents lead a club.

When dummy hits, you see you have a sure spade loser, so it all comes down to picking up the heart suit for no losers. The obvious line is to knock out the ace of spades, and play the ace of hearts, hoping the Q will drop. If it doesn't, you then must decide whether to finesse or play for the drop.

However, there is another line of play that somewhat increases your odds. What is it?

Send your answers to me: billpuzzles@bridgesights.com

The Answer

There is a small but non-trivial chance that you can force the opponents into taking care of the heart problem for you. The way you accomplish this is to strip the hand of diamonds and clubs before you force out the Ace of spades. Specifically, win the first club, play the AK of diamonds, ruff a diamond, and ruff a club. Now lead a trump. If your RHO wins, he will be faced with the following situation.

Dummy

♠K1074

♥AKJ7

♦

♣

You

♠QJ865

♥842

♦

♣

If he happens to have more than one trump, he can exit with a trump and you will be no worse off than you were before. You can cash the A of hearts, and, if the Queen does not fall, decide whether to play for the drop or finesse.

However, if he does not have another trump, he is end played. If he plays a minor suit, you can pitch a heart loser from your hand and ruff on the board. And if he plays a heart, you have eliminated your heart loser.

The lesson from this hand is to give yourself as many chances to make the contract as possible, no matter how small the odds. Sometimes a long shot does come in!