

Big Dummy by Roger Lord

Dealer: East
Vul: Both

	North		
	♠ AK10653		
	♥ AKQ		
	♦ A8		
	♣ A9		
West		East	
♠ 874		♠ QJ9	
♥ J1052		♥ 64	
♦ J42		♦ K96	
♣ 1072		♣ K8543	
	South		
	♠ 2		
	♥ 9873		
	♦ Q10753		
	♣ QJ6		

East	South	West	North
Pass	Pass	Pass	2 Clubs
Pass	2 Diamonds	Pass	2 Spades
Pass	2 Notrump	Pass	3 Notrump
All Pass			

The 2017 Backstoppers game presented this deal. At one table, North opened two clubs (strong and artificial), South made a “waiting” bid of two diamonds, and North disclosed his spade suit. South rebid two notrump, neither fish nor fowl. Although his hand contained scattered values, it was insufficient for a positive response. Acceding to his partner as declarer, North placed the contract in three notrump. The heart deuce was led, and North laid down a near-record 24 HCP plus a point for four aces. (Players usually strive to make the big hand the declarer.)

This is a case of declarers’ attempts to obtain a maximum score, including overtricks. If, for example, eleven tricks were available in a spade contract (650), then a notrump player would receive an inferior score for ten tricks (630) but a top score for eleven tricks (660) on account of the extra ten points scored in notrump.

Dummy won the heart, and declarer called for the spade ace, king and another spade, East winning, as the suit split 3-3. East put dummy on lead with a heart. Declarer could count ten tricks—five spades, three hearts, and two more aces. Inasmuch as there seemed to be a fence between dummy and the South hand, declarer shrugged, claimed ten tricks with dummy’s cards, and conceded the losing diamond and club.

Of course, you would try to find a gate in the fence. Declarer should consider trying to throw in the opponent who holds the club king, so that he would be compelled to exit and give up a trick. First, the third high heart is cashed, to remove the out-card in case East holds a third heart and gets on lead. As expected from his opening lead of the heart deuce, West started with four hearts, East with two. Next, declarer lays down the club ace and continues a club. East wins his king, and he must try to exit effectively. East gets out with the diamond nine.

South faces an agonizing guess. If West holds the king but not the jack, South needs to insert the ten to force the king, thus making the queen good. However, as the cards lie, East holds the king, so the winning guess by declarer is the queen, for the eleventh trick and a top score of 660.

How do you know which diamond to play? That’s what makes bridge a game!