

What happened

West led ♠ 5 against the 3 NT contract. Declarer quickly played low from dummy and beat East's ♠ J with ♠ A. He then looked around, and correctly saw the necessity of removing the opponents' ♠ A. At Trick Two he led ♠ K.

Can you see what East did? He withheld his ♠ A. Declarer followed by leading ♠ Q, but East again ducked his ace. He won declarer's ♠ 5 continuation with his ♠ A and then led ♠ 9. Declarer was now in a complete mess, unable to reach his two remaining clubs. He ducked ♠ 9, won ♠ 5 with ♠ K, then led ♥ 2 to ♥ Q. West won ♥ K, cashed ♠ Q10, then led ♥ 10. Declarer covered with ♥ J and East won ♥ A and cashed ♥ 9. Down three.

What should have happened

Declarer should have taken a little time-out before playing from dummy at Trick One. He would realise the need for retaining his ♠ A for access to his clubs.

He should have won dummy's ♠ K at Trick One (key play), then led ♠ 10. Assuming East ducks, he follows with ♠ 8 to ♠ 9 (East ducking again) and ♠ K to East's ♠ A. He wins East's ♠ 9 return with ♠ A, cashes ♠ QJ, then leads to ♦ AKQ. Nine tricks and game made.

Tip: Do not play from dummy at Trick One without looking ahead.