

Von Impski Files

CHAPTER 24: QUEEN'S GAMBIT DECLINED

“That Ant Slokar, he really is a superb player of his dummies,” La Vlie de Fense was absolutely gushing in her praise of Ant, who it seems had come up with yet another wonderful play. Slokar plays his bridge about the same speed as he plays chess, but being a National champion at the ‘bored’ game, as I call it, he also has many tricks up his sleeve that he has learnt from chess. It seems he had managed to sacrifice TWO queens this time! But let’s hear the full story as it unfolded.

La Vlie is a newcomer to the club. Her father was a champion player in France, so it’s no surprise that Miss de Fense is such a very promising player.

“Which hand are you talking about, Lovely’?” Joe Lenny was always happy to listen to the fairer sex.

“Board 24. Ze beeg 23 count with just two jacques opposite. Ant’s partner Al Lansem overbid and put Ant into 3NT. He was ze only one who had made ze contract when we played it, despite my defence, which I must say was as good as poss-eeble,” La Vlie continued with a tinge of an accent.

Board 24 DLR W NIL VUL

♠ 10 5 4

♥ K 4 3

♦ K 8 7 6

♣ K 6 4

♠ 9 6 2

♥ 10 9

♦ J 10 9 3 2

♣ J 3 2

♠ A Q 3

♥ A J 6

♦ A Q 4

♣ A Q 10 8

♠ K J 8 7

♥ Q 8 7 5 2

♦ 5

♣ 9 7 5

“But you can’t make 3NT. There aren’t ANY entries to dummy for the diamond suit!” Joe was adamant that unless the defence cooperate, the hand won’t make.

“Hah, who needs ze entries? Monsieur Slowcar did not. My partneur Molly, she led a low heart like everyone else and I put up my king. Ant, he won ze ace and laid down his queen of diamonds. Of course I ducked. But zen, he laid down his OZZER queen, ze club, n’est ce pas? What could I do? Of course, ze duck also,” the more she was talking the more she was lapsing into her French accent, and the more engrossed Joe was in what she was saying. “But zen, he played ze ten of clubs. I ducked again, sacrificing MY king. He next played ze ace, and with four club trecks, two diamante, two heart and ze spade ace, zat was making trois, n’est ce pas?”

(hands repeated for convenience)

Board 24 DLR W NIL VUL

♠ 10 5 4

♥ K 4 3

♦ K 8 7 6

♣ K 6 4

♠ 9 6 2

♥ 10 9

♦ J 10 9 3 2

♣ J 3 2

♠ A Q 3

♥ A J 6

♦ A Q 4

♣ A Q 10 8

♠ K J 8 7

♥ Q 8 7 5 2

♦ 5

♣ 9 7 5

Lenny's partner Bruce Leming came in at this stage. "I'm sure Joe would have played it exactly the same way, but we of course were playing the other way, and declarer was not even close to getting it right. He won the heart and tried ace followed by the queen of diamonds. Joe of course ducked until the third round and then exited a heart. Declarer's futile effort of gaining entry with a club resulted in down TWO. You see, instead of just settling for down one, when declarer led a low club to the jack and I won the king, I had to switch to a spade, and declarer finessed, still trying to make his futile contract. Not only did we make three heart tricks, we also made a diamond, club and spade."

Ben Bacon arrived. "ENTRIES? Were you talking about ENTRIES? I don't know why I ever get talked into it, but you know I had the misfortune to partner the Count tonight. He also got a heart lead after I too had trusted that his stated 23-24 count would be enough for 3NT. Vera led a heart, the ten was played from dummy, and Dolly Barton, well, it seems that she had lost her king somewhere among her ample assets. So, she followed LOW. The Count had HIS entry at trick ONE! All HE had to do was to lead the jack of diamonds for a finesse, then the jack of clubs for a finesse and a repeat finesse in clubs, and that was nine tricks in the bag. He probably would even have been able to throw Vera in to lead a spade round to his AQ if he'd been smart enough. He could also have tried a variation on the Slocar play: win the heart, lead a club to the ten and then lay down the queen of diamonds. If Dolly had lost her king of Diamonds as well as her king of hearts, she would duck again, and now the queen of clubs would either win or force Dolly to win and give dummy access for a second diamond finesse. Man, that Von Impski, he is something else, isn't he?"

Just as well I wasn't there to hear this, I'm sure that when it was relayed to me, it wasn't quite like that at all. Ben would NEVER say that about me, would he? As for ME, I thought that leading a diamond to the queen followed by the ace and another would give me the best chance of making the simple way!