

Bridge

Janet de Botton

Many years ago I went to an arty dinner party and met the late abstract painter John Hoyland.

Talk turned — as it does — to infidelity. John said that men are always caught out because they act slightly differently and that the best thing to do to counteract that was to have a haircut! He maintained that you can put your physical ‘strangeness’ down to re-adjusting to your shorter hair. Don’t ask me why but this wisdom has never left me and I always view a haircut with great suspicion!

In bridge it is often the tiny physical adjustments and timings that give a knowing declarer the edge. This hand was played in the Qualifier for the Tollemache Trophy by Nick Sandqvist playing for Middlesex.

Dealer North

N/S vulnerable

♠ 6 3
♥ K 4
♦ A K 9 7 3 2
♣ A K 8

♠ 8 4
♥ A J 6 5 3 2
♦ Q 10 5
♣ J 2



♠ A Q 10 9 7 5
♥ 10 9 7
♦ 8
♣ 9 5 4

♠ K J 2
♥ Q 8
♦ J 6 4
♣ Q 10 7 6 3

West	North	East	South
	1♦	2♠	Pass
Pass	3♦	pass	3NT
All pass			

Despite East’s weak jump overcall West led a Heart which Nick won in dummy and cashed the ♦A, ♣A and ♣K. When Clubs broke, he had eight tricks on top. He cashed all the Clubs, West discarding a spade and two hearts and East letting go a Spade and the ♥10.

Now declarer paused: the defenders were still as zeroed in on the defence as they had been at trick one, and Nick decided that unless his table presence was way off target, the Diamonds were not coming in.

If that were the case, it would be fatal to cash the ♦K, setting up the fifth trick for the defence, so instead he exited a Heart to West. The defence was over. West could take two more Hearts and although declarer had to throw a Diamond from hand, he could win the Diamond switch in dummy and play a Spade towards hand for his ninth trick.