

The trail of a one-IMP difference

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West/Both	♠KJT743	Deal 68
	♥T64	
	♦3	
	♣875	
♠62	♠A5	
♥J97	♥AK32	
♦A65	♦K842	
♣AJT62	♣Q43	
	♠Q98	
	♥Q85	
	♦QJT97	
	♣K9	

West	North	East	South
P	2♠	2N	P
3N	p	p	p

This deal riveted my attention when I was going through the score-sheet of one of the Swiss league rounds in the Mohanlal Bharatia Memorial team event of 2021. On the score-sheet, it only showed a 1-IMP difference, but the cards seemed to have so many stories to tell. Let us begin with the most common contract, namely, 3N by East. On 48 out of 56 Tables, East played in 3Nt. On most of these tables, North passed. Holding just 4 HCP, vulnerable, in the second seat, most players opted against a weak 2♠ bid. South led the ♦Q. Most Easts made 11 tricks.

On some tables, North opened the bidding with a weak 2♠ or a multi 2♦ that showed a weak 2M hand. On two tables, East overcalled 2Nt and West raised to three. South led the ♠8. If you were the De-

clarer, how would you like to go about the 3Nt project?

I guess you would duck the first Spade when North plays the ♠k. Playing against BBO robots, this simple duck on first trick was often enough to get you a good score because the robot, in the programmer's infinite wisdom, opted to shift. That kind of error is unlikely from a human player participating in the Bharatia event, but there is no harm in ducking. We will see later why **it is important** to duck, but let us move on with the play for trick two. Say North continues a Spade and you win with the ♠Ace South dropping the ♠Queen.

You need the Club King onside, so you will play a Club next, however, be careful with the choice of your card. If you play the ♣Queen, and if South comes up with a stiff ♣King, you would have thrown a cold contract for North's 9875 will give him a Club control.

The correct play is a small Club at trick two. South plays small, you win with the ♣Jack, get back to the Closed hand with the ♥King and play the ♣Q picking up South's King and cash Clubs. On the last two Clubs, you discard two Diamonds.

