

An overcall does not help

At a recent duplicate pairs event playing N-S, partner opened 1♣, which was overcalled 1♠. With a 'red two-suiter' I elected to bid 4♥, which ended the bidding! The 10♠ was led (highest of partner's suit) and these were the hands

Dummy                      ♥ 5 ♠ AQJ8 ♦ KJ ♣ K109654

My hand                     ♥ AQ87642 ♠ 7 ♦ A1096 ♣ J

On the lead there is no point in finessing, so the ♠A was played. This was followed by the ♠Q and ruffed in hand. The ♦6 was led to the K in dummy, and the ♠J led, discarding my losing ♣J (the key play). This was ruffed by my LHO with the ♥3, and a ♣led, which I ruffed. Ruffing a ♦ in dummy was considered but with only 6 cards in the suit the probability of the Q falling under the ruff is 27%, and RHO may well be short .

Now we must consider the trump position. We held 8 trumps, so there are 5 trumps out, but one has been played. If trumps break 5-0, the contract will fail. The more likely distributions are 3-2 (68%) or 4-1(28%). The contract will now make if trumps are no worse than 3-2 wherever the ♥K is, and you may only lose one further trump trick. If the trumps divide 4-1, then without discarding the ♣J, the contract is likely to fail, unless there is a singleton ♥K(6%) which falls under your ace.

So play ♥A and concede 2 tricks in ♥s. Fortunately for you, the ♦Q fell when your ace was played. So ten tricks. Looking at the traveller, no other N-S pair had a positive score!