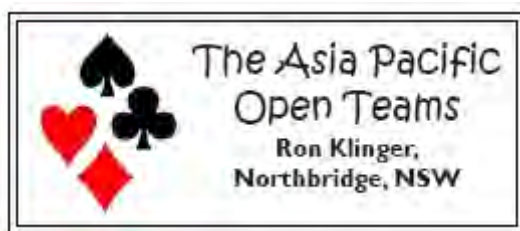


Justin Lall Memorial Declarer Play of the Year

Winner: Sartaj Hans (Australia)
Journalist: Ron Klinger (Australia)
Article: *The Asia Pacific Open Teams*
Event: The 2019 Asia Pacific Open Teams, Singapore, June 11-20, 2019,
 Australia v. China Hong Kong
Source: IBPA Bulletin 654, July 2019, p. 8



The 2019 Asia Pacific Bridge Federation Championships were held in Singapore from June 11-20. The Australian Open Team did rather well on this problem deal from their match against China Hong Kong:

Round 22. Dealer North. Neither Vul.

	♠ J 6 4 2	
	♥ K 10 9 5	
	♦ A 8 5 2	
	♣ Q	
♠ 9 7 3		♠ K 10 8 5
♥ A 7 6 2		♥ 8
♦ —		♦ Q J 10 7 3
♣ J 10 8 7 3 2		♣ K 9 5
	♠ A Q	
	♥ Q J 4 3	
	♦ K 9 6 4	
	♣ A 6 4	

West	North	East	South
<i>Hung</i>		<i>Edgton</i>	
—	Pass	Pass	INT
Pass	2♣	2♦	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

With Australia East/West and Hong Kong North/South, Andy Hung (West) led the three of clubs to the queen, king and ace. Declarer ruffed a club, finessed the queen of spades, ruffed his last club and played the king of hearts: eight – three – two and the nine of hearts: diamond three – heart four – heart ace. Hung continued with clubs and had trump control. The result was one down, East/West plus 50.

At the other table ...

West	North	East	South
—	<i>Gill</i>		<i>Hans</i>
Pass	Pass	Pass	INT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			

West led the jack of clubs: queen – king – ace. Sartaj Hans (South) also ruffed a club, led a spade to his queen and ruffed his last club. However, when the king of hearts held, Hans continued with a diamond from dummy. East followed with the ten, Hans played his king and West ruffed in. West cashed the ace of hearts and led another club for Hans to ruff, East discarding a diamond on the heart and a spade on the club. These cards remained:

	♠ J 6	
	♥ —	
	♦ A 8 5	
	♣ —	
♠ 9 7		♠ K 10
♥ 7		♥ —
♦ —		♦ Q J 7
♣ 10 3		♣ —
	♠ A	
	♥ Q	
	♦ 9 6 4	
	♣ —	

When South played the queen of hearts to draw West's last trump and discarded the six of spades from dummy, East was squeezed in an odd way. While East was considering his discard, Hans claimed, stating, "If you ditch a diamond, I shall play the ace of diamonds and another diamond. If you pitch a spade, I'll cash the ace of spades and then endplay you with the nine of diamonds." When Hans discarded a spade from the dummy, he was left with just one threat suit, diamonds. However, East still had two material suits and had to unguard one of them. That was ten tricks, plus 420 and 10 IMPs to Australia.

Additionally, had declarer discarded a diamond on the queen of hearts, East would still have been squeezed, but in that situation, it would have been a criss-cross squeeze without the count, another oddity. A diamond discard would have allowed Hans to set up his fourth diamond as a winner, with the ace of spades as an entry, while a spade discard would have meant that the ace of that suit would then have dropped the king. The ace of diamonds would have been the entry for the established jack of spades. In either case, it was very nice card-reading, a very-well-played deal and an elegant ending.

Why did Sartaj Hans play as he did? The natural move, after the king of hearts held the trick, was to continue hearts. That would have succeeded if hearts had been 3-2; if they'd been 4-1 and diamonds 3-2, Hans would still have been alright. However, after South had opened one notrump West, his screen-mate, had thought for some time before passing. Hans commented: "Since West held at most the ace of hearts, the queen-jack of diamonds and the jack of clubs in high-cards, a 5=4=2=2 or a 5=4=3=1 shape would not have warranted such a pause. He must have had six clubs and four hearts for the hesitation. The absence of a singleton diamond lead suggested to me that he was 3=4=0=6. To cater for my legitimate make when he had 2=4=1=6 shape, I led a diamond to my king. If both opponents had followed, I'd need to have continued with the ace of spades and then another diamond through West before playing any more trumps."

I had watched the play on BBO and the next day I asked Hans, "Would you have played the diamond nine if West had played low on the two of diamonds from dummy?" He replied: "Not sure what I

would have done. There was some chance LHO had a singleton queen or jack that he did not elect to lead. Playing the nine of diamonds would have worked very well on the actual deal (if East had not split) as I could then have neutralized his trumps, whatever defence he chose. In practice, however, players always split the queen-jack-ten, so perhaps the discussion is academic." East's rising with a diamond honour on the diamond two from dummy was not fatal to the defence. However, after West ruffed South's king and cashed the heart ace, a spade shift instead of a club would have laid declarer low.

In the Open Series, there were 11 declarers in four hearts, but just two of them were successful.