

## The Solution to Birdman of Alcatraz Challenge

This is a hand from Fred Gitelman in The Canadian Masterpoint magazine almost 20 years ago. I'll copy his comments.

This hand is not a particularly difficult. It is intended for intermediate players. However, many of the experts who try this problem go down.

*The reason was the most common source of expert error: playing too quickly*

A novice might make the mistake of using the AH to take the diamond finesse. They would make the contract whenever RHO held the KD. An easy improvement is to draw two rounds of trumps & play AD & QD. The JD will provide trick number ten. This looks so obvious that many experts stopped thinking at this point. A good habit to get into, before embarking on any line of play, is to ask yourself: what could go wrong?

S: KQJ  
H: xx  
D: Kxxxxx  
C: xx

S: Axx.  
H: KQJT9.  
D: AQ.  
C: AKx.

S: xxx  
H: Axx  
D: Jxx  
C: xxxx

S: xxxx  
H: xxx  
D: xx  
C: xxxx

On the above layout, LHO will win KD and play another diamond and RHO will ruff out JD leaving the contract with no hope.

The solution is not difficult (*oh yer!*)

After drawing only one round of trumps, lead QD without cashing the DA. Declarer is now in control and will be able to unblock the AD & draw trumps, ending in Dummy. The JD can then be used to discard declarer's club loser.

Even the best players in the world make careless errors.

You'll always make mistakes but if you take your time and ask yourself: what could go wrong? You'll find mistakes get fewer.