Hello Allan,

Here is my solution to problem numbers M/A 1 for 2021: The Bridge Problem

Declarer (South) can be stopped from making the 6NT contract. South has 11 sure high card tricks but needs to win one more trick with either the J of spades or the J of hearts.

The distribution needed to defeat the contract is when one defender has at least 4 spades headed by the Q10 and the other defender has at least 4 hearts headed by the Q10; it does not matter if West has the spades and East has the hearts or vice versa. Distribution of the other cards in the West, North, and East hands are irrelevant. North (dummy) will not win any tricks since South has all the high cards. Based on the distribution below, West would never discard a spade, nor would East discard a heart, unless that was their only choice. West must lead either a diamond or club to avoid giving South a free finesse in spades or hearts.

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South has three scenarios on how to play the hand, but all of them will fail:

1. South cashes 11 sure tricks (4 clubs, 3 diamonds, 2 hearts, and 2 spades) and has the J of spades and J of hearts remaining. West has Q10 of spades and East has Q10 of hearts. South must lead a J which will lose to the Q, and then the 10 of that same suit will win the trick to defeat the contact.
2. South cashes 9 sure tricks (4 clubs, 3 diamonds, 1 heart, and 1 spade) and has KJ of spades and KJ of hearts left in the hand. West has Q10xx of spades and East has Q10xx of hearts. (A) South could lead the J of spades, which will lose; West returns the 10 of spades which South wins with the K. Now South must lead from KJ of hearts while East has Q10 of hearts; either way, East will win a trick with the Q to defeat the contract. (B) South could lead the K of spades, which will win, and then the J of hearts which will lose to the Q in the East hand; East returns a heart which South will win, but then has only the J of spades left which will lose to the Q in the West hand.
3. South could cash only four winners (e.g. 4 aces), or some other variation, and then lead the J of spades which will lose to West, who returns anything but a heart. South can cash all the rest of the winners in the hand but will still end up with the losing J of heart at trick 13.