

Voyage of Discovery

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

Forgive the grandiloquent title; we are not talking here about Lewis and Clark, or the HMS Beagle, or even Christopher Columbus. We merely refer to declarer's intelligent (but hardly epic) play of the ♣K in the following deal:

Board 6												
East Deals		♠ K 9										
E-W Vul		♥ 8 5 4										
		♦ Q 10										
		♣ Q J 10 8 4 2										
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	N											
W		E										
	S											
♠ Q 8 4		♠ 7 3										
♥ J 10 7		♥ A K Q 2										
♦ 9 6 5 2		♦ A 8 7 4										
♣ 9 7 5		♣ A 6 3										
		♠ A J 10 6 5 2										
		♥ 9 6 3										
		♦ K J 3										
		♣ K										
West	North	East	South									
		1 NT	2 ♠									
All pass												

Just in case it happens to be a really useful clue, we should point out that East's 1NT showed 15-17 HCP.

The defense cashes three hearts, and then East shifts to the ♦A followed by a low diamond. How do you play the trump suit?

All things being equal, you would play a spade over to the ♠K, and then finesse the ♠J on the way back. This might seem even more appealing when you remember that East opened 1NT and therefore has most of the missing HCP. But remember also that East has already shown up with ♥AKQ and ♦A. That's 13 HCP. So you can see that if East has the ♣A that gives him 17 HCP and no room for the ♠Q... and if East does not have the ♣A then he *must* have the ♠Q for his 1NT opening.

What's needed here is a so-called "discovery play" before tackling trumps. After winning the diamond return, you play the ♣K in order to smoke out the ♣A. When East shows up with that card, he's up to his maximum quota of 17 HCP, and now it's a certainty that West has the ♠Q. That being the case, you ruff East's club return and take an immediate finesse of the ♠9! The ♠K is now cashed, then back to hand with a club ruff (fortunately there is no overruff from West). The remaining trump is extracted and it's eight tricks for those who did some counting and discovering.