

Fishing for Clues

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

As the play of the hand develops declarer is constantly on the lookout for clues which will point to the right line of play. But these clues don't always come gift wrapped, sometimes declarer must go fishing.

Board 3
 South Deals
 E-W Vul

♠ 5
 ♥ Q J 6 3
 ♦ A J 7 4 3 2
 ♣ A 8

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

West North East South

1 ♥

Pass 2 ♦ Pass 3 ♦

Pass 4 ♥ Pass 6 ♥

All pass

Against 6♥, West tries a heart lead and declarer draws trumps in two rounds. It's a fine slam but not quite iron clad. There's a spade to be lost, and the key to success is to avoid losing a diamond. How would you play the hand, looking only at the N-S cards?

If diamonds are 2-1 then declarer is home free, but suppose the suit is 3-0. Now he has a guess. If he thinks that West is more likely to hold three diamonds then he'll play his ♦K on the first round, later finessing against the ♦Q if East does indeed show out. Conversely, he'll play dummy's ♦A first if he suspects that East might have the three diamonds. Which do you choose?

At this point it's a complete guess. So, before playing diamonds, declarer goes fishing. He concedes a trick to the ♠A, and let's say that West returns a club. Declarer ruffs that, then cashes spades, and reels in a whopper of a clue when East shows out on the third round. Ha! Now declarer knows that East started with four cards in the majors, and West with eight. The odds have changed dramatically. If one of the defenders has three diamonds it's surely East. So declarer plays dummy's ♦A on the first round, and says (a silent), "Yippee!" when West shows out. Twelve tricks if declarer delays the diamond play and first looks for clues in the other suits.

The full deal:

♠ 5
 ♥ Q J 6 3
 ♦ A J 7 4 3 2
 ♣ A 8

♠ A 9 8 4 3 2
 ♥ 8 4
 ♦ —
 ♣ 10 9 7 5 4

♠ 7 6
 ♥ 9 2
 ♦ Q 8 5
 ♣ K Q J 6 3 2

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