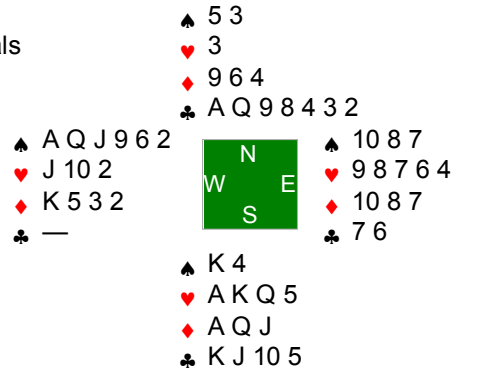
Right-Siding the Contract

By Brian Gunnell

Board 12
West Deals
N-S Vul



West	*North*	*East*	*South*
1 ♠	3 ♣	Pass	6 NT
All pass			

6 NT by South

As can be seen, six clubs (played from the North side) is down one in a hurry after East's opening spade lead. So South sensibly bid 6NT to "right-side" the contract, putting West on lead and protecting the ♠K. Against 6NT, West leads the ♥J. Can you make twelve tricks?

Declarer can count only eleven top tricks and can be sure (from the bidding) that the ♦K and ♠A are both with West. Does that mean that 6NT is destined to fail? Actually, no, because declarer can organize an end-play. Declarer wins the opening heart lead, cashes the other heart winners and rattles off seven clubs. West's last three cards will presumably be ♠A and ♦K5, and declarer will come down to ♠K and ♦AQ. Now, West is thrown in with a spade and must lead a diamond, giving declarer his twelfth trick. That pretty ending is known as a strip squeeze.

Post Script: West might have thwarted the squeeze by coming down to ♠AQ and ♦K, but an astute declarer will suspect that West has the ♠Q for his opening bid and will play to drop the ♦K instead of trying the spade throw-in. A more thoughtful West will bare the ♦K early in his discards, and will also pitch away the ♠Q and ♠J, coming down to the fiendishly devious ♠A6 and ♦K! Nobody would fault declarer for now assuming that West started life with 5-3-5-0 distribution, and for misguessing the end-game as a result. Wicked defense, Mr. West!