

A Train to Catch

When he bid 6NT, could North be sure that East-West wouldn't cash two diamonds on the go? Almost. East supposedly had seven diamonds ... if South's stopper was the ace or king then no problem ... and if South held Qxx then West probably couldn't lead the suit!

Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ 9 7 6 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W	E	S	♠ 4 3 2
N						
W						
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♥ Q J 10 6	♥ 7 3 2					
♦ —	♦ A Q 8 7 4 3 2					
♣ J 10 9 7 6	♣ —					
<table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr><td>♠ A K Q J</td></tr> <tr><td>♥ 9 8 5 4</td></tr> <tr><td>♦ K J 9</td></tr> <tr><td>♣ A 8</td></tr> </table>			♠ A K Q J	♥ 9 8 5 4	♦ K J 9	♣ A 8
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♦ K J 9						
♣ A 8						

Against 6NT West led the ♥Q. Judging from what followed, one can only assume that this was the last board of the evening and that declarer had a train to catch. He counted nine top tricks, realized that a couple of diamond tricks would not get him up to twelve, concluded that the clubs had better be 3-2, and announced to the assembled throng: "Making slam if the clubs are 3-2, down one if they are 4-1". When it turned out that clubs were actually 5-0 the protagonists negotiated a settlement of down two.

West	North	East	South
3 NT	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
All pass			6 NT
6 NT by South			
Lead: ♥ Q			

If declarer had not been reliant on public transport and had given more thought at trick one then he might have seen that the contract had chances even if clubs misbehaved. Our question is: At trick two, what is the only card from dummy which enables declarer to make his contract? That's right, dummy must lead the diamond ten, being prepared to let it ride if East plays low. But say that East hops up with the ace and fires back another heart. Now, declarer is up to eleven tricks. He takes his two diamond tricks, then his spades, and poor West is done for. He cannot retain control of hearts *and* clubs, something has to give, and a squeeze produces the twelfth trick!

That diamond play at trick two gave declarer an extra chance and could hardly cost. Even if the finesse improbably lost to West's singleton queen, declarer would still make his contract if the clubs were 3-2.