

The Art of Concealment

South opens one notrump, North raises to three and West leads the ♥10.

Declarer can see enough tricks once the ♣K is out of the way, but those spades look somewhat fragile. We have two questions. Firstly, how do you play the hearts? Secondly, how do you play the clubs? These questions are not misprints, we'd really like to know!

Declarer can see that the opening heart lead is from 109xx or some such holding. But, from East's seat, it might well be from holdings such as A109x

or K109x or Q109x. How can declarer muddy the waters and create some doubt in East's mind? He could routinely play low from dummy, as most would, but the play most likely to cause confusion is surely the jack! Declarer then wins the trick with the ace, and East will say to himself: "I've seen this movie before. Declarer was hoping that I had the queen and would cover. Clearly he is laying a false trail and has AK doubleton in the suit"

Now declarer plays on clubs. If he leads the ♣Q then that pretty much advertises the situation. So, instead, he runs the less informative jack, and when East wins the king he'll have some thinking to do. Declarer has a maximum of three points in diamonds, and appears to have seven points in hearts. The club situation won't be clear, and East might visualize declarer's hand as: ♠KQx, ♥AK, ♦Q10xx, ♣J87x, or something similar. If so then a heart continuation beats the contract.

A less devious declarer will play a low heart from dummy on trick one, and will run the ♣Q at trick two. When East wins his king, he'll have more clues, and is more likely to diagnose declarer's spade weakness. If he does, he will be sure to switch to the spade *jack*, a so-called "surrounding play" which allows the defense to grab four spade tricks, setting the contract.

Board 6

East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K 7 4
♥ 10 9 8 2
♦ Q 10 5
♣ 4 3 2

♠ 10 3 2
♥ J 4 3
♦ A K 6 2
♣ A 10 9



♠ A J 9 5
♥ 7 6 5
♦ 9 8 4 3
♣ K 5

♠ Q 8 6
♥ A K Q
♦ J 7
♣ Q J 8 7 6

	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	3 NT	Pass	1 NT
Lead:	♥ 10		All pass	