

222. Deep Study

Playing in a team game with a reliable partner, I hold in fourth position:

♠A K 9 7 6 4 2 ♥K 3 ♦A 5 2 ♣10

West, on my left, passes, as does partner. East opens **two hearts**, weak. I have the makings of nine tricks, which should offer a play for game even if partner contributes very little, so I try **four spades**. West passes and partner goes into deep study. Eventually he emerges with **six spades**. No one doubles, so the bidding has been:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	2♥	4♠
Pass	6♠	All Pass	

West leads the eight of hearts and this is what I see:

♠ J 8 3
♥ 10 7 2
♦ Q 10 7
♣ A K 8 5

♥8 led

♠ A K 9 7 6 4 2
♥ K 3
♦ A 5 2
♣ 10

Preliminary evaluation:
Assuming spades break, I have eleven tricks and may have a chance for my slam if East doesn't sever my communications. After winning the ace of hearts, she ponders as I hold my breath, but eventually she returns the queen of hearts. I win the king as West follows with the

nine suggesting an original three-card holding.

There is nothing better to do than to work on spades. I pass my second hurdle when the queen of spades appears on the ace. On the next five spades, West throws a heart, club and three diamonds; East follows once and throws two hearts and two clubs. From these discards I conclude that West is protecting clubs and East diamonds. This is the position I visualize:

♠ —		♠ —
♥ —		♥ J
♦ Q 10		♦ H 9
♣ A K 8		♣ x x
♠ —		♠ —
♥ —		♥ J
♦ H 8		♦ H 9
♣ H x x		♣ x x
	♣ 2	
	♥ —	
	♦ A 5 2	
	♣ 10	

On the last spade, West discards a fourth diamond. My view is that he is still holding three clubs, so the eight of clubs is expendible; East throws his last heart. Both follow when I play the ace and king of clubs. I have ♦Q10 in dummy opposite ♦Ax in hand. The question is: has West been forced down to a singleton diamond honor? If it is the king, it will fall under the ace; if jack, I can pin it by leading the queen from dummy. (If East has bothcards, everything is academic).

Would East be more likely to open a weak two in third position with ♥AQJxx with or without the king of diamonds? Frankly, I don't see an indication either way. On the other hand, East has clung tightly to her diamonds and West appeared to have easy diamond discards. I call for the queen of diamonds. East covers with the king. I take the ace and await West's card. He looks me squarely in the eye, but eventually produces the jack. I do my best to repress a smile while claiming the ten as the twelfth trick.

The full deal:

♠ J 8 3	♠ 10 5
♥ 10 7 2	♥ A Q J 6 5
♦ Q 10 7	♦ K 9
♣ A K 8 5	♣ 6 4 3 2
♠ Q	♠ A K 9 7 6 4 2
♥ 9 8 4	♥ K 3
♦ J 8 6 4 3	♦ A 5 2
♣ Q J 9 7	♣ 10

Points of interest:

- A critical juncture in the hand was East's play on the second trick. The ♥8 lead was a good start for the defense because it denied the ♥K. This might have steered East in the right direction to try a club to cut declarer's link with dummy, leaving declarer with no chance.