

231. BridgeBase Queen

Playing bridge on-line against unknown opponents, I hold in first chair:

♠ Q 6 4 ♥ A 9 5 4 3 ♦ — ♣ A K 9 8 3

With both sides vulnerable, I open **one heart**. West, on my left, jumps to **three diamonds**. Partner competes with **three hearts**, and East passes. To make a forced raise at the three level, partner can have quite a good hand. The key will be high cards in diamonds, which would be duplicated opposite my void. This is an IMP-pairs game and there is a heavy premium on vulnerable games. I decide to chance **four hearts**. There are no doubles. The full auction:

South	West	North	East
1♥	3♦	3♥	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

West leads the ace of spades and partner puts down the unwanted ace of diamonds:


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

Initial evaluation: If this is a doubleton ace, as appears likely, I am in serious trouble. As it is, the contract looks hopeless. West continues with the king and another spade, and my queen wins the third trick. How fortunate! Perhaps I can reconstruct the hand. West preempted vulnerable, which likely

shows seven diamonds. He then produced three spades. That leaves three cards in the rounded suits. East must have at least four diamonds but showed no interest in raising the preempt. The most likely reason is that he has hearts. If I start with the ♥A, I don't like my chances of holding the trump losers to one. Instead, I begin with a low trump, seven, ten, and jack.

East returns a club. All of a sudden, the deal has my full attention. The club return has created a real play for the contract. Assuming East has the ♣Q, I can run the club to the board's jack, finesse East's ♥K, and claim. It occurs to me that East may have been endplayed on this trick. A heart return solves my trump problem; a diamond return has the same effect by giving me an entry to dummy; and a club return compromises his ♣Q.

But why should East give me two for one? Why give up both the club and heart suits, assuming that he has ♣Qxx and ♥Kx remaining? He can simply play a diamond to the ace and leave me to my own resources in clubs and hearts. The reason may be that he doesn't have the queen of clubs!

I decide to back my judgment. I play the ace and king of clubs. West pauses interminably but eventually produces the queen. I look at the  symbol next to his internet name, which identifies him as one of the top point winners on BridgeBaseOnline. To me, he is just a hot dog! I cross to the jack of clubs as West discards a diamond, and take the marked finesse of the king of trumps. Plus-620 is worth 7.67 IMPs in the speedball game.

The full deal:

<p>♠ A K 2 ♥ 7 ♦ K 10 9 8 7 5 4 ♣ Q 5</p>	<p>♠ 10 9 5 3 ♥ Q 10 6 2 ♦ A 2 ♣ J 6 4</p>
<p>♠ Q 6 4 ♥ A 9 5 4 3 ♦ — ♣ A K 9 8 3</p>	<p>♠ J 8 7 ♥ K J 8 ♦ Q J 6 3 ♣ 10 7 2</p>

Point of interest:

- This deal is a distant cousin of the famous hand played by Lee Hazen against Oswald Jacoby in 1939:

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

After Jacoby preempted three hearts, Hazen jumped to six spades as a stab in the dark. Jacoby began with the ace and another heart to dummy's king. Hazen led a spade for the finesse but then asked why a top expert had been so generous to present him with an entry to dummy. The answer was that Jacoby could not be trusted to be acting in Hazen's best interests. So Hazen rose with the ace and plucked off Jacoby's singleton king.