

259. Flair

Playing in a team game against experienced opponents, I hold:

♠ Q 5 ♥ A 10 9 7 ♦ A K 10 6 5 ♣ A 10

With both sides vulnerable, I open **one diamond** as dealer. West, on my left, passes, and partner responds **one spade**. East passes. I have enough to reverse into **two hearts**. West passes and I now hear **three clubs** from partner, which we play as forcing to game. If someone is to play three notrump, it should be me. I don't want to find partner with ♣Jxx and get a lead through my ♣Ax. My **three notrump** ends the auction:

South	West	North	East
1♦	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	3♣	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

West leads the six of clubs and partner puts down what he promised:

♠ A 10 9 3 2
♥ 5 4 3
♦ J 3
♣ K 4 3

♣6 led

♠ Q 5
♥ A 10 9 7
♦ A K 10 6 5
♣ A 10

Preliminary evaluation: I have six tricks on top with chances in spades and diamonds. On the opening lead East produces the queen of clubs, which I win. It is more convenient to begin with spades, so I lead the ♠Q and ride it to East's king. The ♣5 comes back. I play the 10 from hand and duck West's jack. On the next club I win the king, West playing the 8 and East the 2. What should I discard? The diamonds have long-card value, so I choose a heart, throwing the *ten* to display some flair.

I am in dummy for my main chance. I lead the jack of diamonds. East obligingly covers with the queen and I win the ace. On the ♦K, West discards a low spade. So much for diamonds! I am unsure whether the spade discard is good or bad—West may have long spades or lack of interest. I

play the ten of diamonds to give him a chance to throw another spade, but he discards the six of hearts.

It is time to face up to spades: I lead low and finesse the nine, and East discards a club. The distribution is now reasonably clear. West started with five spades and a singleton diamond. It also appears he led from a three-card suit, leaving him with four hearts originally.

My only chance is a fourth spade trick. I keep the spade tenace intact in dummy, and lead a low heart to the nine. West wins the queen, and continues the king. I win the ace as East follows with the ♥J. I think West has the high heart and two spades. I exit with the ♥7 and West reluctantly wins the ♥8. His forced spade lead from ♠J8 allows me to repeat the spade finesse for nine tricks.

The full deal:

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

• It is often advantageous for declarer to throw a higher card than he has to. For players with long memories, this was the diamond configuration on No. 130 of this series:

♦ 5 3		♦ —
♦ Q J 9 8 7 6 4	♦ A K 10 2	

West led the ♦Q and South won the ace. At the eleventh trick declarer led a low diamond from dummy toward his ♦K102 and cleverly played the two. The fate of the hand depended on whether declarer had had the foresight to play the ♦5 on the first trick. Why? Because West had held onto his

◇4! Dummy was left on lead with losers in other suits.

- When declarer discarded from ♠A1097 opposite three small, it didn't matter whether he threw the ten or the seven because the defenders had three tricks whenever the suit broke 4-2.

- When West saw declarer's ♠10, he should have responded in kind. If declarer could afford the ♠10, West could afford his ♠8. Then he would have had the last laugh.