

212. Misplaced Apology

Playing in a regional team game, I hold:

♠ 9 ♥ K 9 5 ♦ K J 10 8 7 5 4 ♣ J 6

West, on my left, deals and passes. Partner opens **one club**, which we play as strong and artificial. East passes, and I jump to **two diamonds** to create a game force. We eventually reach **seven diamonds** after this tortuous auction:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	2NT	Pass	3♦
Pass	4♦	Pass	4♥
Pass	4♠	Pass	5♦
Pass	5♥	Pass	5♠
Pass	7♦	All Pass	

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

♠ A K 4
♥ A J 6 2
♦ A Q 3
♣ A 7 5

♥8 led

♠ 9
♥ K 9 5
♦ K J 10 8 7 5 4
♣ J 6

Initial Evaluation:

We have twelve top tricks but the lead, which appears to be top of nothing, has just dealt a blow to our chances for a thirteenth. Are there any viable options left?

Normally a lead into this kind of holding would allow two bites of the apple, finding West with either queen or ten of hearts. In this situation, I can't imagine that West has underled a queen against a grand slam; there is too much chance of giving away a cheap trick. Instead, I am going to try something else. I win the ace of hearts in dummy to preserve my ♥K9 as a threat against East. I fall back on the old standby of running the long suit. I play six rounds of diamonds. East follows once and discards a spade, heart, and three clubs; West follows twice and discards two spades, a heart and a club. I throw two hearts and a club from dummy.

There are six spades, four clubs and two hearts outstanding. My guess is that each opponent is holding three spades. East surely has the ♥Q10; that leaves him with a singleton club opposite his partner's three clubs.

If I play my seventh diamond at this stage, I will have to discard a black card from dummy prematurely. I decide to back my hunch about the black suits. I lead a club to the ace; West follows with the nine and East with the queen. Next I return to hand with the king of hearts. East plays the ten and West discards a club. Now I think I have them. This is my read:

	♠ A K 4	
	♥ —	
	♦ —	
	♣ 7	
♠ Q x x		♠ J x x
♥ —		♥ Q
♦ —		♦ —
♣ K		♣ —
	♠ 9	
	♥ 9	
	♦ 7	
	♣ J	

On the last diamond, the club is discarded from dummy and both opponents throw spades. Now the ace, king and four of spades leave me with thirteen tricks.

The full deal:

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

Point of Interest:

• At the end of play, East apologized to his partner for throwing clubs instead of spades. But assume he discards two spades and two clubs. In this case, declarer plays the top spades, extracting East's spades, and returns to the king of hearts. Now the last diamond executes the same type of double squeeze but with different threats: spade against West, heart against East, and clubs against both. Once declarer recognizes the ♥8 lead as placing the heart honors in East's hand, the hand is "cold" so long as declarer reads the discards correctly.