

## 230. Alternative Prospect

Playing in an IMP-pairs game against unknown opponents, I hold:

♠ A 8 6 2   ♥ 4 2   ♦ K 7 5   ♣ A 9 6 4

Vulnerable against not, we reach three notrump after this auction:

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

West leads the queen of hearts and I can see that we have pushed this to the limit:

♠ Q 3  
♥ A 10 8 5  
♦ A Q 9 4 3  
♣ J 5

♥Q led

♠ A 8 6 2  
♥ 4 2  
♦ K 7 5  
♣ A 9 6 4

*Initial evaluation:* If diamonds break, we have eight tricks. The only immediate prospect of a ninth is the queen of spades, but that may present entry problems.

I win the ace of hearts in dummy and cross to the ♦K to lead toward the spade queen. West rises with the ♠K and plays the ♥9, covered by the ten and king. East now shifts to the ♣K, cutting my link to the ace of spades. There is no point in holding up, so I win the ace, and revert to diamonds. Both follow to the ace. On the next two diamonds, West throws hearts and East and I throw each throw a spade. Before the last diamond, this is the layout:

♠ Q  
♥ 8 5  
♦ 4  
♣ J

♠ A 8  
♥ —  
♦ —  
♣ 9 6 4

On the diamond, East discards the ♠10. Before my discard, I conduct a count. East showed up with three diamonds. He followed to two hearts and that figures to be his limit in the suit. West led the ♥Q and ♥9 and discarded two more. The jack has not appeared and West surely has it. That leaves East with one spade remaining, probably the jack, and therefore three clubs. One must be the queen and I have to hope he also has the ten.

It seems clear that I have to keep all my clubs, so I discard the eight of spades. West also discards a spade. It is not good enough to lead a club at this point; I must clear the spades. I overtake the queen with the ace and lead a club to the jack and East's queen. He thinks for a moment and produces the seven. I have ♣96 remaining and cover with the nine. It holds for my ninth trick. The full deal:

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

*Point of interest:*

- East is squeezed on the last diamond. If he throws his losing club, keeping an extra spade, declarer also throws a club. He then cashes the ♠Q and uses East's club winners as steppingstones to the ♠A. When East keeps three clubs, declarer must ensure that he is on lead at the twelfth trick. This requires declarer to cash the winning spade before exiting in clubs. With ♣Q107 remaining, East is helpless to deny a trick to declarer's ♣9.