

351. Last Option

Playing in a Swiss match at the Labor Day tournament, I hold:

♠ A K J 9 ♥ K 9 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ K 10 5 4

At favorable vulnerability, my partner and I reach **six clubs** after this auction:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1NT
Pass	2♠	Pass	3♣
Pass	6♣	All Pass	

After some thought, West leads the ♥J and dummy goes down:

♠ 3
♥ A 10 5
♦ A K 7 3
♣ A J 9 8 3

♥6 led

♠ A K J 9
♥ K 9
♦ 10 8 5
♣ K 10 5 4

Despite partner's roughshod methods, this is rather well bid by us! If clubs play for no losers, we have twelve tricks. If they don't, we have other chances: spade finesse, heart finesse, even ♦QJ-doubleton.

On the heart lead, I play small from dummy and win the king in hand. Before addressing trumps, I evaluate the heart lead. Undoubtedly, it is a doubleton or singleton, which leaves East with six or seven hearts. On this assumption, there are a lot of empty spaces in the West hand and he is a clear favorite to have the ♣Q. I cash the king of clubs and lead a club toward dummy. West throws the five of spades. This is a blow. Not only is there a trump loser, but the ♠5 does not appear to be West lowest spade. He may be instinctively signaling possession of the queen of spades.

I do an updated count. I assume that East has six hearts, and he is now marked with three clubs. That leaves him four cards in the pointed suits. There is still a chance he can have the ♦QJ-doubleton or the ♠Q-doubleton, but both are remote. Nonetheless, there is a far better play if he has doubletons in both suits. I play the ace and king of diamonds. Low cards appear from both

defenders. I now play the ace and king of spades, and once again low cards appear. It doesn't hurt to ruff a spade in dummy. West follows and East discards a heart.

Now is the time to put East on play with his trump queen. He wins the queen but is left with only hearts in his hand, and he must give me my twelfth trick with the ♥10.

The full deal:

♠ 3 ♥ A 10 5 ♦ A K 7 3 ♣ A J 9 8 3 ♠ Q 10 7 6 5 4 ♥ J 4 ♦ Q J 6 4 ♣ 6 ♠ A K J 9 ♥ K 9 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ K 10 5 4	♠ 8 2 ♥ Q 8 7 6 4 2 ♦ 9 2 ♣ Q 7 2
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The key read was the jack of hearts opening lead. With the ♥10 on view, it was almost certain to be from shortness. If so, East had six hearts, perhaps seven.

Making the assumption that East had six or more hearts left West with eleven empty spaces in his hand compared to East's seven. All of a sudden, the trump finesse against West went from 50% to 61%.

When East showed up with the third club, declarer as a last resort played for this layout:

♠ 3 ♥ A 10 ♦ A K 7 3 ♣ J 9 8 Immaterial ♠ A K J 9 ♥ 9 ♦ 10 8 5 ♣ 10 5	♠ x x ♥ Q x x x x ♦ x x ♣ Q
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He cashed the high spades and high diamonds and threw East in with a trump for a heart lead.