

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

READING THE LEAD

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ AJ7 ♥ 8543 ♦ 876 ♣ AJ9	
♠ Q42 ♥ QJ962 ♦ KJ2 ♣ Q7	North West East Declarer	♠ 8 ♥ K7 ♦ AQ9543 ♣ 6543
	♠ KT9653 ♥ AT ♦ T ♣ KT82	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
		Pass	2♦
2♠	3♦	4♠	All Pass

East's Weak Two shows 5-10 HCP and a 6-card suit. N-S cruise into 4♠, West leads the ♦2 won by East's Ace, then a low Diamond, ruffed by Declarer, West following with the Jack. Looking just at the N-S hands, what can you deduce from the play so far? And how do you play the hand?

The bidding tells Declarer that East started with six Diamonds and West with three. If West had KQx he would have led the King ... if East had ♦AK he would have played the King on the first trick ... therefore (unless there is some fiendish false-carding going on) West started with ♦KJ and East with ♦AQ.

Who has the ♠Q? Generally speaking, Declarer would play the Spades from the top, playing for the drop of the ♠Q in one or two rounds. This line is a slight favorite over the alternative of finessing (one way or the other) against the Queen. But the odds changed when East showed long Diamonds (leaving less room in his hand for Spade cards), so here Declarer correctly decides to cash the ♠K and finesse the ♠J on the second round.

That's the first guess successfully negotiated, now where is that ♣Q? Declarer cannot be sure, so she plays ♥A and another Heart, hoping to learn more, and on the second Heart East wins his King. At this point Declarer can be fairly certain that East started with 1=2=6=4 distribution. As East has four Clubs to West's two does that make East more likely to hold the Queen? Not in this case! East has shown up with 9 HCP, there's no room left in his 5-10 hand for the ♣Q. So, Declarer plays West for that card and, thanks to a little counting, she brings home her vulnerable game with an overtrick.

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