

Take your only chance

Dealer: S Vul: All	North ♠ K Q 10 8 7 ♥ Q ♦ 9 2 ♣ K J 9 6 4	
West ♠ 4 ♥ J 7 6 5 4 2 ♦ K 8 6 3 ♣ A 5		East ♠ 3 2 ♥ K 8 3 ♦ Q 10 7 5 4 ♣ 8 7 2
	South ♠ A J 9 6 5 ♥ A 10 9 ♦ A J ♣ Q 10 3	

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
Pass	2♣	Pass	3♣
Pass	4♠	Pass	6♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

When your normal line is doomed to fail, you have to ask yourself if there is any layout of the cards that will let you succeed. It may take a bit of imagination to visualise the needed lie of the cards, but if making your contract depends on such a holding to exist, you have to think about what it might be. Then, having done that, you have to decide if it is worthwhile trying for it. You don't want to go down an extra trick if the odds are a thousand to one against your wish coming true.

North South used a brisk route to six spades. It would have been cold against any lead but a diamond.

When West found the killing diamond lead, South no longer had time to set up the clubs. Fortunately, South had one last chance.

WEST'S LEAD

West had a very difficult choice. but finally chose to lead a diamond away from his king.

This was not totally a stab in the dark. West knew that North-South had tricks in clubs which could be used for discards.

When your opponents have shown they have a side suit which can be used for discards, it is often right to lead away from a king or queen hoping to set up a trick in time to use it. This is true even against a slam. While leading aces is often best, here it is a very bad choice since you expect there will be long club suit in dummy. Leading the ace of clubs would just help declarer. West's choice of a diamond was well thought out and it gave declarer a problem.

THE PLAY

After winning the diamond lead and drawing two rounds of trump, South led the queen of hearts from dummy. East was obliged to cover and South won the ace. Next came the ten of hearts. This time it was West's turn to cover in the hope that East had the nine of hearts. But not so. South ruffed and returned to his hand with a trump. The heart nine was good for a diamond discard so South was able to concede a club loser. Making six spades. Even though South's play risked going down an extra trick, it was very reasonable to try for it.

"I would never have bid the slam without the nine of hearts," joked South.