

Bridge Detective – Who’s Got the Queen?

by Barbara Seagram

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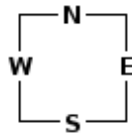
North

♠ A42

♥ AKQ

♦ 765

♣ AJ42



South

♠ KQJ

♥ J42

♦ AJ

♣ KT753

South	West	North	East
1NT	3♦	6NT	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: K♦

Here we are in 6NT. After the king of diamonds is led, declarer, with only one diamond stopper, is feeling somewhat nervous. She counts her sure winners and finds three spades, three hearts, one diamond and two sure club winners. She needs three more to make twelve tricks. She recognizes instantly that everything depends on locating the Q Clubs and getting three extra tricks in the club suit.

Short of peeking at the opponents' hands, what are her options? Does she simply finesse, praying and guessing all the while? Does she recite the nursery rhyme "Eight ever, nine never!" in the hope that the Q C will drop? Nursery rhymes work for children, but not always at the bridge table! Alternatively, since West preempted 3 D, he probably has a shortage in clubs. Should declarer therefore expect East to have C Qxx?

Perhaps there is something we can do to make guessing unnecessary. When faced with the possibility of a finesse, try to postpone that action until you have more information about the deal. After all, finesses work only 50% of the time... unless you live right!

You should plan to play the problem suit, clubs, last, and extract as much information as possible along the way.

After the lead of the K D, declarer should not win the first trick. There is absolutely no hope of scoring thirteen tricks on this hand (if you don't believe me, count again!). So South ducks Trick one and West continues with the Q D. East shows out and South wins the second trick.

Counting is arduous at any level. When counting out a hand, it is much easier to focus on one opponent, generally the one that has the known long suit. When East shows out in diamonds, declarer knows that West started life with seven diamonds. Declarer can focus all her attention on West from now on.

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Declarer continues by playing three rounds of spades, a non-problem suit, noting that **West shows out on the third round**. Next she plays three rounds of hearts. **West shows out yet again on the third round**. Let's tally up the known cards to date: West started with seven diamonds, two spades and two hearts; ergo, he is marked with only two clubs. Since declarer and dummy have a total of nine clubs, we now know that Clubs are breaking 2-2. We can play the club suit with impunity, certain that the Q Clubs will fall under the ace-king. That ensures twelve tricks and the contract!

The whole deal:

	♠ A42	
	♥ AKQ	
	♦ 765	
	♣ AJ42	
♠ 108		♠ 87653
♥ 108		♥ 97653
♦ KQ109842		♦ 3
♣ Q6		♣ 98
	♠ KQJ	
	♥ J42	
	♦ AJ	
	♣ K10753	