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CONTRACT BRIDGE

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By Steve Becker

Contract Bridge

A DELICATE OPERATION

West dealer.
Both sides vulnerable.

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

WEST
♠ 8
♥ Q 10 8 6 2
♦ 8 6 5 4
♣ 9 5 3

EAST
♠ J 9 5 4 2
♥ A 7 5 3
♦ A K
♣ 7 4

SOUTH
♠ A Q 7
♥ K 9
♦ Q J 9 2
♣ K J 10 6

The bidding:

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	1 ♠	1 NT
Pass	3 NT		

Opening lead — six of hearts.

Some contracts look impossible to make, but a tenacious declarer does not concede defeat before giving his assignment the old college try. Take this deal where South winds up in three notrump after East has opened with one spade. West leads a heart to East's ace, and a heart is returned to South's king.

Prospects are certainly dim at this point. Declarer sees eight tricks, with very little chance for a ninth. It appears that the only possibility is to cash the ace of spades, hoping to find West with the singleton jack and in that way acquire a fourth spade trick. The chance of West's having the singleton jack is very remote, but if this were the only chance South had, he'd have to play for it.

However, there is a much more promising possibility, namely that West started with the singleton eight or nine of spades, in which case a fourth spade trick can be developed with careful play.

Accordingly, South cashes the king of clubs at trick three and then plays the jack, overtaking with dummy's queen. He then leads the ten of spades.

East is forced to cover with the jack, won by South with the ace and catching West's eight. Now the ten of clubs to the ace is followed by a low spade from dummy, and when East follows low, declarer finesses the seven.

South's diligence is rewarded when he next cashes the queen of spades and then leads the carefully preserved six of clubs to dummy's eight, allowing him to collect the king of spades for trick number nine.

Admittedly, this line of play requires a certain degree of luck as well as meticulous planning, but nonetheless it's all entirely logical. And, when all is said and done, bridge is a logical game.

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