

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

PLAYING THE PERCENTAGES

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ AQ8 ♥ 643 ♦ K2 ♣ QJ765	
♠ K963 ♥ 9 ♦ JT9 ♣ AT432	North West East Declarer	♠ T4 ♥ 875 ♦ Q8643 ♣ K98
	♠ J752 ♥ AKQJT2 ♦ A75 ♣	

Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
		1♣	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♥	Pass
6♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

West leads the ♦J and when Dummy goes down you can count only 11 tricks: six trumps in hand, two Diamonds and a ruff in Dummy, and two Spades (regardless of who holds the ♠K). Where's the 12th trick?

To make your contract, you will need to score a third Spade trick. After the ♠Q has been successfully finessed on the first round, how do you play to the second round of Spades? You are doomed to failure if the missing Spades are 5-1 ... and destined for success if the suit is 3-3 ... so what's the play that gives you the best chance when the Spades are 4-2? The two choices are:

- *Either*, cash the ♠A, hoping that West started with a doubleton King.
- *Or*, lead the ♠J from hand (which West will cover with the King). This caters for East holding the doubleton Ten or doubleton Nine, allowing Declarer's mighty ♠7 to provide the 12th trick!

That should be an easy decision! Kx with West is one winning chance ... Tx or 9x with East is two winning chances. It doesn't need a mathematician to figure out which play is more likely to succeed. After the percentage play brings home the slam, Declarer will avoid saying "My 6♥ was a bit optimistic, but of course I wouldn't have bid it without the Spade Seven". Unless, that is, he wants to infuriate the opponents.

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