

THINKING BRIDGE - - By Eddie Kantar

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Take all your chances at bridge - 5

By Eddie Kantar

♠ K 10 8 3

♥ 10

♦ A 9 4 3

♣ A J 3 2

♠ A Q J 9 7 4

♥ A K Q

♦ Q 8

♣ Q 6

You open 1♠, partner splinters to 4♥, showing a singleton heart, four or more spades, plus opening-bid values. You have too good a hand to fool around. Partner must have minor-suit honor cards. You bid 4NT, Roman Key Card Blackwood with 1430 responses.

Partner makes a second-step response of 5♦, showing zero or three key cards. Given partner's strong bid, partner must have three key cards: both missing aces plus the ♠K. East doubles the 5♦ response. Undaunted, you continue with 5NT asking for specific kings up the line. If partner has either minor-suit king, you can count 13 top tricks and will bid 7NT. Alas, partner denies a king by returning to the six level of the agreed suit, spades.

I know you would bid 6NT after partner bids 6♣ with the South hand. It is clearly the right bid, but I want to see how you play 6♠ with the ♦5 lead.

Solution

In a contract of 6NT, you would play low from dummy and claim after East took the king. It would also be quite reasonable to play low from dummy in a contract of 6♠ had there been no double. However, with the double and the ♦K placed to your right, you have a safer play. After all, the lead could be a singleton!

Go up with the ♦A, draw trumps, strip hearts, discarding two diamonds from dummy, and exit a diamond to East's king, stripping both your hand and dummy of diamonds. East, in with the ♦K, has no answer. If East exits with a club, you have a free finesse in the suit. A diamond exit lets you discard a club from your hand and ruff in dummy. Either way, you have 12 tricks.

As it happens, East tipped the duke by doubling 5♦. Had East not doubled, West would have led a diamond anyway and you might have gone down playing low from dummy. If the lead isn't a singleton, playing low ensures 12 tricks.

The full deal:

	♠ K 10 8 3	
	♥ 10	
	♦ A 9 4 3	
	♣ A J 3 2	
♠ 6 2		♠ 5
♥ J 9 8 5 4		♥ 7 6 3 2
♦ 5		♦ K J 10 7 6 2
♣ 10 8 7 5 4		♣ K 9
	♠ A Q J 9 7 4	
	♥ A K Q	
	♦ Q 8	
	♣ Q 6	