

PERFECT TECHNIQUE

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Date of publish: 11/1/2012 Level: Intermediate to Advanced

This deal was played in the 2012 U.S. Team Trials by [Chris Willenken](#):

He chose to open 1♦, dealer at favorable vulnerability holding:

♠Q
♥K 9 6 3 2
♦A K Q 10 8 4
♣10

Apparently, he considered the hand good enough to reverse (planning to bid hearts twice). LHO passed and partner made the surprising (but pleasing) response of 1♥! RHO preempted to 2♠ and Chris chose to cue-bid 3♠. LHO bid 4♠ and Chris's partner, Michael Rosenberg, bid 5♦. Right or wrong, Chris chose to pass, thus buying it in 5♦.

The ♠7 was led (3rd and 5th best leads) and he saw:

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

East won the ♠A and played the ♣K then a low club. How should declarer play?

This deal is all about the heart suit. If they are 2-2, declarer can draw trump and then lay down the top hearts to make 11 tricks. But, might hearts be 3-1? Why not try to get a count on the hand. How?

The first move is to carefully trump the club carefully with the ♦10 (to preserve the ♦8 and ♦4 for crossing to dummy).

Next come the trumps. On the ♦A, East plays the jack. Chris now crossed (sorry--couldn't resist that!) with the ♦8 to the 9 (RHO showing out) and ruffed a 3rd round of clubs high (all following). Now came the the ♦4 to the ♦5 to ruff a 4th round of clubs. RHO showed out.

Since the lead was a 3rd/5th best ♠7, declarer knew spades were 4-7 (West would have led a low one from a 5-card suit). So, RHO has 7 spades, 1 diamonds, 3 clubs and therefore 2 hearts. There is no reason to take any heart finesses. Declarer laid down the top hearts and this was the full layout:

Vul: E-W Dir: South	♠8	
	♥A J 7 4	
	♦9 6 5 2	
	♣J 8 4 3	
	♠K 9 7 3	♠A J 10 6 5 4 2
	♥8 5	♥Q 10
	♦7 3	♦J
	♣A 9 7 5 2	♣K Q 6
	♠Q	
	♥K 9 6 3 2	
	♦A K Q 10 8 4	
	♣10	

At many tables in the Round Robin, declarer (in hearts, so unable to get a complete count), played the preempter for short hearts and lost a heart trick by playing low to the ♥K and then finessing the ♥J. Willenken's team won 7 IMPs for +400 when his teammates played in 5♠ (bid against North-South's 5♥). The defense was accurate, carefully cashing out for down 1 (-100 E-W).