

THINKING BRIDGE -- By Eddie Kantar
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Dir: West Vul: None	NORTH ♠ K 10 7 6 ♥ A 6 5 4 ♦ Q J ♣ K 4 3		West	North	East	South
			1 NT(1)	Pass	Pass	2 Heart
			Pass	3 Heart	All Pass	
WEST ♠ A 4 3 ♥ K Q ♦ A K 10 9 ♣ 10 9 8 7	29 th July 2012	EAST ♠ J 8 2 ♥ 8 ♦ 7 5 4 3 2 ♣ Q J 6 2	Opening Lead = ♦ A.			
	SOUTH ♠ Q 9 5 ♥ J 10 9 7 3 2 ♦ 8 6 ♣ A 5					

Bidding commentary: When the opponents die out at the one level, chances are that the points are more or less evenly divided between the two partnerships.

Translation: If you are in the balancing (passout) seat with a long suit, bid it! South should expect to find 10–12 high-card points in partner's hand. Partner has a bit more than expected, hence the raise to 3♥. South is thrilled to pass.

Defensive commentary: After cashing the ♦ A and ♦ K, West exits with the ♣ 10.

Play commentary: As declarer, add your HCP to dummy's. Here, both sides have 20, and West has at least 15 of those 20. With four certain losers, the plan is to avoid guessing who has the ♠ J. You want to force them to lead a spade by throwing them in with a trump. Win the ♣ A, cross to the ♥ A, leading the jack to induce a cover, cash the ♣ K and ruff a club, stripping clubs. Then exit with a heart. West wins the heart perforce and must lead a spade, obviating the spade guess, or give you a ruff-sluff by leading a minor. If West elects to give you a ruff-sluff, ruff in partner's hand and discard a spade from your hand, the hand that is shorter in spades. This is the technique for handling a ruff and a sluff in an unequally divided suit. If you neglect to strip clubs before exiting a heart, East can exit safely with a club, leaving you to guess who has the ♠ J.

Messy, messy.

With an inevitable slow trump loser (the ♥ K) and a suit you want to force them to lead (spades), strip the side suit(s) before exiting (triumphantly) with a trump