

THINKING BRIDGE -- By Eddie Kantar

(From - NABC Summer - 2016 · Washington · DC -2)

Dlr: South	♠ 7 4 3 2
Vul: Both	♥ A K 7 6 5
	♦ 3 2
	♣ Q J
	♠ A K Q J 10 8
	♥ 4 3 2
	♦ A Q
	♣ A K

You open a strong 2♣, partner bids 2♥ (natural) and raises your 2♣ to 3♣. You quickly arrive in 6♣ and West leads the ♣10. Plan the play in 6♣. Incidentally, how would you play 6NT on the same lead?

You start with 11 top tricks and if the hearts divide 3-2 - a 68% chance - you have an easy 12 by ducking a heart. Even if hearts are 4-1, you can set up dummy's fifth heart for a diamond discard if you have a spade entry in dummy . . . but you don't!

The answer is to combine your chances by discovering early on if hearts are 3-2 or 4-1. Once you know the heart division, you will know whether you need the diamond finesse.

Win the ♣A, draw trumps and lead a low heart towards dummy. If West plays any heart other than the queen, win the ace and follow with a low heart from dummy.

Now you know whether hearts are 3-2 or 4-1. If hearts are 3-2, you can discard your ♦Q on the fourth round of hearts. If hearts are 4-1, abandon hearts and take the diamond finesse. If you duck a heart early and East wins and returns a diamond, you won't know how hearts are breaking. You will be faced with a decision you could have avoided.

The percentage play is to go up with the ♦A and hope hearts are 3-2. It's different if West plays the ♥Q. You must play low! If the queen is singleton, West will surely exit with another club. You can then play a heart to the ace and try the diamond finesse unless West and East both follow suit. An extra chance no matter how small is still an extra chance in reserve gives you an 85% chance of landing your slam. In 6NT, run off six spades, discarding a heart and a diamond, and then play hearts as suggested. The full deal:

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