

THINKING BRIDGE

By Eddie Kantar

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Card combinations, part 4

Dir: South Vul: None	NORTH ♠ A Q J 10 ♥ A 6 3 2 ♦ J 8 ♣ Q 6 5		West	North	East	South
			--	--	--	2 NT
			Pass	3 Club	Pass	3 Diamond
			Pass	6 NT	All Pass	
WEST ♠ 9 8 7 6 2 ♥ 10 4 ♦ Q 6 3 ♣ 9 4 3		EAST ♠ 5 ♥ K 9 8 5 ♦ 7 5 4 2 ♣ 10 8 7 2	Opening Lead = ♠9.			
	SOUTH ♠ K 4 3 ♥ Q J 7 ♦ A K 10 9 ♣ A K J					

Bidding commentary: Your 2NT opener shows 20-21 high-card points, balanced (some play 20-22). Partner, with 14 HCP, has more than enough to leap to 6NT once no 4-4 major suit fit is available.

Defensive commentary: If, early on, declarer leads a low heart from dummy, as East, play low. Declarer may have Q-10-x and decide to insert the 10. Also, if declarer has Q-J-x, you force declarer to lead low a second time from dummy.

Play commentary: You start with nine sure tricks. The best play to make that number 12 is to give yourself three chances in the play. Win the lead in dummy and lead a low heart, the correct way to play this card combo. To confirm, check the hearts in the East hand. If you run the jack or queen, East wins and you get two heart tricks. If you lead low toward the queen and then the jack, you get three. Nor does it matter if West has the king. You still get the same number of heart tricks (or more) by leading up to the Q-J-x.

If the queen loses to West's king, test the hearts. If they are 3-3, you have 12 tricks. If not, fall back on the diamond finesse, your third chance in case you are counting. If you try the diamond finesse before testing the hearts and it loses, you need to find West with the ♥K. Not nearly as good a chance as testing hearts before diamonds