

Lindsay's Challenge - February 2018 newsletter:

Smart End Play

North

♠ A Q J 3
♥ A 10 6 3 2
♦ 7 6 4
♣ A

West

♠ K 9
♥ K 7
♦ 5
♣ K Q J 10 9 6 3 2

East

♠ 7 6 4
♥ Q 9 8
♦ 9 8 3 2
♣ 8 7 5

South

♠ 10 8 5 2
♥ J 5 4
♦ A K Q J 10
♣ 4

How can South make 6 Spades with K clubs lead from West?

South, in an optimistic spade slam, won the lead in dummy with the singleton ace. The next step was to come back to the South hand with the ace of diamonds and lead the 10 of spades. West covered with the king and dummy's ace, queen and jack removed all the outstanding trumps.

South proceeded to cash up the diamond suit, a safe enough process since the defenders had no spades left, discarding two small hearts from the north hand.

There is a strong temptation to lead the jack of hearts at the tenth trick but if this urge is followed declarer will be beaten, for West covers with the king and East must then make two heart tricks.

South saw a better way, a very simple one. The ace of hearts became the tenth trick and was followed with a small heart. West won with the king and had to lead a club back allowing dummy to trump and declarer to discard the last heart in hand.

Even if West unblocks by throwing the king under the ace, declarer will lose only one heart to East's queen.

The only thing that will beat South is both heart honours guarded in one hand, an unlikely contingency. But if the slam is played in hearts instead of spades, declarer cannot avoid two losers by any stratagem and will surely be beaten.