Book Bridge
with Ron Klinger

I enjoy problem-solving in a book of bridge puzzles. Here is one of them:

West	East
♠ A J 10	♠ Q 7 2
♡ Q 5	♡ A K 8 4 3
◇ 8 7 2	◇ A 5
♣ K Q J 6 5	♣ A 10 7

Contract: 6♣ by West. Lead: ◇ J.

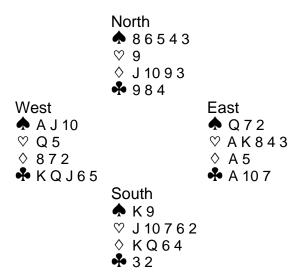West wins trick 1 with the ◇ A and plays ♣K, ♣A. Both opponents follow. How would you continue?

Make up your mind before reading further.

Solution:

The deal comes from *Improve Your Dummy Play*, by Eric C, Milnes and Paul Lukacs. After ◇A, ♣K, ♣A, the natural temptation is to continue with ♡Q, ♡K, low heart ruffed high. With hearts 3-3 or 4-2 (c.84%) you have two heart winners in dummy. You play a low club to the ♣10 to draw the last trump and cash the two heart winners to discard two diamonds from hand.

At pairs, if you feel most pairs will reach 6♣, that is a sensible line of play. At teams, you can improve your chances. How?

This was the complete deal:

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                      North
                      ♠ 8 6 5 4 3
                      ♡ 9
                      ◇ J 10 9 3
                      ♣ 9 8 4
        West                        East
        ♠ A J 10                    ♠ Q 7 2
        ♡ Q 5                       ♡ A K 8 4 3
        ◇ 8 7 2                     ◇ A 5
        ♣ K Q J 6 5                 ♣ A 10 7
                      South
                      ♠ K 9
                      ♡ J 10 7 6 2
                      ◇ K Q 6 4
                      ♣ 3 2
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After ◇A, ♣K, ♣A, if you play ♡Q and the ♡5, North ruffs and plays a diamond. One down.

After ◇A, ♣K, ♣A, it costs nothing to play the ♠Q from dummy. In the above layout, South is almost certain to cover and would mostly do so also from ♠K-x-x or ♠K-x-x-x. If the ♠Q is covered, you win, draw the last trump and then play ♡Q, ♡K, ♡A, pitching a diamond. You are now certain for 12 tricks and still make an overtrick if hearts are 3-3. At teams or IMPs, that is certainly the best play.

If the ♠Q is not covered, you still revert the line of setting up hearts.

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