

# BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

## BACKING THE FAVORITE

By: Brian Gunnell

	♠ Q4 ♥ K7 ♦ QJ7 ♣ KJT852	
♠ 5 ♥ 832 ♦ 986432 ♣ Q76	North West East Declarer	♠ J9876 ♥ T654 ♦ A ♣ 943
	♠ AKT32 ♥ AQJ9 ♦ KT5 ♣ A	

### Both Vulnerable

South	West	North	East
		1♣	Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
6NT	All Pass		

South wastes little time in reaching 6NT, West leads the Diamond Nine and, when Dummy goes down, Declarer can see just 11 top tricks. How would you go about getting the 12<sup>th</sup> trick?

One possibility is that one or other of the defenders has the doubleton ♣Q. If that doesn't work then you will have to fall back on the Spades, and that's a suit which offers you a choice ... either play the Spades from the top, hoping that the Jack comes down in three rounds ... or cash the Queen and finesse the Ten. If you look at the Spade suit in isolation, it's a close call as to which line is better (playing for the drop is a slight favorite). But, as the play of the hand develops, watch how the odds change.

East wins that opening Diamond and a Heart is returned. You cash the remaining Hearts, then the ♣A, ♦K, ♦Q, and ♣K. The ♣Q does not fall on the play of the Clubs, so now it all comes down to the Spade suit. Is playing for the drop of the Jack still the slight favorite? Not at all! East showed up with one Diamond and four Hearts, and pitched a Spade and a Club when you played the Diamonds. That means he must have started out with three or four Clubs, so his original distribution must have been 5=4=1=3 or 4=4=1=4, there are no other possibilities. What does that tell us? That East started with more Spades than West and is therefore more likely to have the Jack. So the percentage pendulum has swung in favor of taking the Spade finesse. 12 tricks for those who did a little counting.

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