

I found this hand truly fascinating. It occurred at Hawkhurst Bridge Club one Thursday evening in January earlier this year:

	♠ A9874 ♥ KQ1053 ♦ 75 ♣ 2	
♠ KJ63 ♥ --- ♦ AKQJ10982 ♣ 5	N W E S	♠ 102 ♥ AJ98 ♦ --- ♣ KQJ10973
Dealer: South Vul: All	♠ Q5 ♥ 7642 ♦ 643 ♣ A864	

I occupied the West chair and, after South had passed, it was my turn. What would you choose? 2♣ was an option - three losers, solid 8-card suit? I rejected that choice as, apart from my solid suit, I also had four spades. What about 3NT (my wife's suggestion when I showed her the hand when I arrived home after play)? I quite liked the idea but I rejected it on the grounds that it may well have ruled out the possibility of a slam. I settled for 1♦ in the end. North overcalled 1♥, my partner bid 2♣ and South tried 2♥. What now? I eventually bid 3♥, a cue bid of the opposition suit, in an endeavour to convey the message that I had a decent hand but was unsure of where we were going. He bid 3NT then and so the matter rested there.

South led a heart and partner beat North's ♥K with his ace. I suspect that I might have tried a spade at this point, in the hope that dummy's king would provide an entry to that spectacular diamond suit but it would be important to lead the ♠2 to the ♠J as a competent defender in the North chair would duck the ♠10 and turn dummy's diamonds into waste paper. North would not be able to duck the ♠J as declarer would then be able to run a plethora of diamonds. However, my partner took another route. He played on clubs, immediately conveying the messages to his watchful partner, that he did not hold the ♠A and was void in diamonds. South won his ace of clubs and played a second heart, won by North with her queen. A third heart followed, won by declarer's ♥J. At the end, declarer managed to take a spade and thus emerged with 9 tricks - game made. We achieved 68.75% on the board but it should have scored better! Six pairs had contracted for 5♦, three made it exactly, two were one down and one made an overtrick!! 5♦ could (perhaps should), be defeated: the defence can take a club trick and two spades. I suppose that some Norths, understandably, led the ♥K, allowing the club to be discarded. I cannot offer an explanation for the declarer who made twelve tricks unless North led the ace of spades and continued the suit but even then, how did declarer manage to avoid losing a club trick?

