Board 16
West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 6
♥ A 9 7 3 2
♦ A Q J 8 2
♣ A J

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      N
   W     E
      S
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♠ A K J 5 4
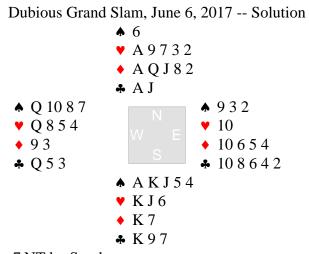♥ K J 6
♦ K 7
♣ K 9 7

7 NT by South

After an auction best forgotten, you land in 7 NT. Plan the play on

(a) the correct lead of the ♦ 9, and

(b) the actual lead of the ♠ 7.

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West Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 6
♥ A 9 7 3 2
♦ A Q J 8 2
♣ A J

♠ Q 10 8 7　　　　　　　♠ 9 3 2
♥ Q 8 5 4　　　　　　　♥ 10
♦ 9 3　　　　　　　　　♦ 10 6 5 4
♣ Q 5 3　　　　　　　　♣ 10 8 6 4 2

♠ A K J 5 4
♥ K J 6
♦ K 7
♣ K 9 7

7 NT by South

When the opponents bid to 7 NT and you hold three queens, partner probably does not have as much as a jack. Lead the fourth suit; the ♦ 9 is correct, but a sneaky ♦ 3 would be fine. With a diamond lead, declarer should try to bring in the heart suit. You can do this if East has the ♥ Q with no more than three cards. A singleton ♥ Q with West won't help, but if East has a singleton ♥ Q, you must lead low toward the ♥ K first. When East plays the ♥ 10 on the first round, declarer has an alternative to finessing: rise with the K and lead the ♥ J for the first of two finesses -- not likely, as the ♥ 10 could be East's play from ♥ Q10 or ♥ Q10x.

West's actual lead of the ♠ 7 was helpful, bringing my trick total up to twelve. An excellent approach is to combine chances: play the ♥ AK, and if her majesty has not appeared, take the club finesse. When that wins, it's not hard to untangle three spades, two hearts, five diamonds, and three clubs: 13 tricks.

However, I'm an inveterate squeezer. I won East's nine with the ♠ J, took three diamonds to assure they split and discard the ♠ 4 (West, under pressure, discarded the ♣ 3). Next the ♣ K and the ♠ AK, discarding two hearts from dummy, with both opponents following. On the lead to the ♣ A, West discarded a heart.

A classic double squeeze position had been established, but I did need to read the situation correctly; I played East for the club guard. The suit in which both opponents would be squeezed is hearts (even though only one could actually guard that suit). With no winners left in either of the black suits, two winners were required in hearts for the squeeze to function properly; those honors are the entries. With East clutching the ♣ 10 for dear life, this was the end position.

　　♠ -
　　♥ A 9 7
　　♦ J 8
　　♣ -

♠ Q
♥ Q 8 5 4
♦ -
♣ -

　　♠ 5
　　♥ K J 6
　　♦ -
　　♣ 9

On the ♦ J, I pitched a heart, and West also could afford a heart. After the last diamond, East still had his ♣ 10 and thus could not hold three hearts. I let go the ♣ 9, whose job was done. West eventually tried discarding the ♠ Q. I cashed the ♥ AK, and the ♠ 5 made 13 tricks.

-- Pete Matthews