

The opponents' bidding can often assist declarer in the play of the hand. So, if it appears the hand belongs to the opposition, it's often a good idea to keep quiet and give away as little information as possible. This isn't as easy as it sounds because the temptation to tell partner that you have a long suit can often be too hard to resist. West was guilty of that on this month's hand where East dealt with both sides vulnerable :

	K963	
	1085	
	K1062	
	AK	
8		Q72
AQ98743		K
754		Q8
QJ		10976532
	AJ1054	
	J2	
	AJ93	
	84	

East Passed as dealer, South opened One Spade (marginal but conforming to the Rule of 20) and West could not resist a weak jump overcall of Three Hearts. North raised to Four Spades and that became the final contract.

East's led was the Queen of clubs, won by dummy's Ace. Looking at the North/South hands only, how many tricks do you think declarer might make ? There could be a loser in both spades and diamonds, and there are two inescapable heart losers because the duplication in diamonds and clubs does not allow for any discard. So it looks as if declarer will win nine, ten or eleven tricks.

Before leading a card from dummy at trick 2, declarer paused to think about the information available from the bidding and opening lead. West very likely held a seven-card heart suit for his vulnerable jump overcall facing a partner who had passed as dealer. West would surely have led the Ace of hearts if his suit was headed by the Ace/King, and would very probably have preferred to lead the King of hearts (instead of the Queen of clubs) from a suit headed King/Queen. Therefore West's heart suit was AQxxxxx and East held a singleton King. The Queen of clubs opening lead might have been a singleton but that would place East with an eight-card suit in which case East might have thought about making a preemptive opening bid.

Dummy's King of spades won trick 2 and declarer led a low spade from dummy at trick 3, finessing the Jack when East followed with the seven. In normal circumstances declarer might have played the Ace of spades, hoping for a 2-2 split, but West's known length in hearts persuaded declarer to finesse. The Ace of spades drew East's last trump and declarer followed by leading a club to dummy's King at trick 5 on which West played the Jack.

So West had started with AQxxxxx in hearts and QJ of clubs. If West also held the Queen of diamonds he might have been a bit too good for a weak jump overcall so it looked as if East held that card. Sure enough – dummy's King of diamonds won trick 6 and East's Queen appeared when dummy continued with a second diamond at trick 7. This was the position, with declarer on lead at trick 8 :

	9	
	1085	
	106	
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AQ987		K
7		---
---		109765
	105	
	J2	
	J9	
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Declarer led the nine of diamonds over to dummy's ten, then returned the six of diamonds to his Jack (East discarding clubs). At trick 10 declarer led his two of hearts and West ...

In order to win his side's two heart tricks, West had to win this trick with the *Ace* so that he could cash his Queen next (an example of a Crocodile Coup – West wins the trick with the Ace, an unnaturally high card, in order to 'swallow' his partner's King and keep his partner off lead). When West failed to spot the impending danger and played his Queen of hearts, poor East was forced to win the trick with his singleton King. East could only lead a club at trick 11 so declarer discarded his Jack of hearts and ruffed in dummy and won the last two tricks with the two remaining trumps in his own hand. Twelve (yes twelve !) tricks made.

Both East and West had chances to restrict declarer to eleven tricks. East could have discarded his King of hearts at tricks 8 or 9 while West could have won trick 10 with the Ace of hearts instead of the Queen. But declarer played the ending very well. In the position above, had declarer first led his Jack of diamonds and then led over to dummy's ten, it would have been dummy who would have led a heart. Once East plays his King of hearts on dummy's lead, it becomes easier for West to overtake with the Ace and cash the Queen next.

Enjoy your bridge.