

Reader Dave Simmons kindly told me about this lovely deal from the Hitchin Bridge Club Saturday evening Bridge Base Online duplicate. How do you try to make 5♣ on ♠J lead? You've got some thinking time while I run through the play and defence to the more popular contract of 5♠ by East-West.

The best defence to 5♠ (say declared by East) is for South to cash a top club (if declared by West, South wins North's club lead) and, at trick two, switch to a sneaky seven of diamonds. Declarer must now guess to rise with the king. They next lead the jack of spades and must guess to finesse, playing the 5♣ bidder for a void. The favourable heart layout will then result in them cashing the suit, shedding dummy's remaining diamonds, and so making an overtrick. The fact that no East-West made 12 tricks suggests that South cashed the ace of diamonds at trick two, rather than underlead it. Understandably so at Pairs, for the underlead risks giving away the overtrick.

On to the main item on the agenda: the beautiful play to make 5♣ on J♠ lead. I have to be honest, I got it wrong when Simmons gave me the hand.

I thought that if you cover with dummy's king and shed a diamond on East's ace, you can set up diamonds without letting West in to switch to a heart through dummy's king-jack. However, East switches to his club at trick two and a crucial dummy entry is removed prematurely — no longer can you set up diamonds and the game must fail.

Instead, you ruff the jack of

Dealer: West, Vulnerability: North-South

Pairs	♠ K3 ♥ KJ ♦ Q109853 ♣ 1084				
♠ J109762 ♥ 942 ♦ KJ6 ♣ 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W   E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W   E	S	♠ AQ854 ♥ AQ1075 ♦ 42 ♣ 7
N					
W   E					
S					
	♠ - ♥ 863 ♦ A7 ♣ AKQJ9632				

S	W	N	E
	Pass(1)	Pass(2)	1♠
5♣	End(3)		

(1) Anyone for a Weak 2♠ ?  
 (2) Anyone for a Weak 2♦ ?  
 (3) Most Wests bid 5♠ (as I would have done).

Contract: 5♣, Opening Lead: ♠J

spades lead. At trick two, you cash the ace of diamonds, then cross to the eight of clubs, drawing trumps. At trick four, you lead dummy's king of spades and, when East plays the ace, you discard your losing diamond (key play).

East is endplayed. Ace and a heart sets up dummy's king. A spade gives declarer ruff-and-discard, declarer ruffing in hand (unusually, taking the ruff in the long hand), discarding a heart from dummy, then able to concede a heart and ruff their two remaining hearts. A diamond is worst of all; declarer ruffs (high), crosses to a club (perhaps the two to the four), ruffs a third diamond (bringing down the king), crosses to dummy's last club, and cashes the three long diamonds, shedding the three hearts. Game made — beautiful. [andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk)