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Board 1	♠ 432 ♥ A6 ♦ AJ96 ♣ J987	Dlr North None Vul
♠ AK985 ♥ 85 ♦ T72 ♣ AQ5	<i>North</i> Dummy Declarer <i>South</i>	♠ QT ♥ QJT942 ♦ 5 ♣ 6432
	♠ J76 ♥ K73 ♦ KQ843 ♣ KT	

A common HCP range for **Weak Twos** is 5-10, so by that standard the East hand qualifies. Some might shy away from 2♥ here, on account of the appalling absence of Aces and Kings but, as the saying goes: "Six-four, bid more!" In fact, we even know players who would open 3♥, applying maximum pressure to the opponents (and sometimes also to Partner). Anyway, let's say that East's exuberance results in him declaring 4♥, and that South leads the ♦K. How should North signal on this trick?

After Partner's opening lead, the general style of signaling is to give attitude (unless we are competing for the trick), but in some situations you might want to deviate from that. For example:

- The opponents are at the 5- or 6-level (often a cash-out situation), in which case we **give count** if the opening lead is a King
- Dummy has a void or singleton in the led suit, in which case we **give suit preference**
- Partner leads the Ace (from A-K) and Dummy has the Queen, in which case we give count.

Another useful count situation is when Declarer has preempted. Let's say that N-S are blessed with this agreement, in which case, on that opening ♦K lead, North will play a high Diamond to show an even number. But the Nine is not high enough, that could be from ♦AJ9 (leading South to think that another Diamond will cash). North must signal with the Jack! That makes all things clear to South, who will know that North started with ♦AJ96 when Declarer follows with the Five (North would overtake the King if she started with ♦AJ doubleton).

Knowing that Declarer must have started with just one Diamond, South shifts to the ♠K! It's the defense's only chance. Dummy wins and leads a Heart which North ducks and South wins. Back comes a Club, setting up North's ♠J, which she'll cash when in with the ♥A. That was really spiffing defense, and we would expect Declarer to make 10 tricks at almost every table (and certainly at those tables where South tries to cash a second Diamond).

We'd be surprised if many N-S pairs missed 6NT on **Board 3**.

♠ A5 ♥ AQ32 ♦ T64 ♣ Q865	<i>North</i>	
	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	<i>South</i>	
♠ KQJ ♥ K9 ♦ AK3 ♠ AJT73		

N-S have 21 opposite 12, which is usually enough for 6NT, barring bad luck. We include this (flat?) board merely out of curiosity about South's opening bid. Assuming that the N-S range for opening 2NT is 20-21, do the South players open 2NT? Or do they open 2♣, planning to rebid 2NT (which commonly shows 22-23). It's one of those **hand evaluation** problems which come up several times a session, what's your choice?

Here are the bad things about South's hand (though when you are dealt 21 HCP, "bad" is a relative term):

- Triplet ♠KQJ: just adding a spot card would improve the suit's potential, and reduce the chance of wastage (Partner might have Axx or Ax, as on the actual deal.

That's a short list of negatives! On the plus side:

- A maximum of 21 HCP's
- A five-card suit.
- The magnificent JT in that five-card suit!

Yes, it's the lovely Club holding that makes the hand worth upgrading, so we expect most pairs to get to 6NT via the left auction and not via the right auction (although both work just fine!):

<i>South</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>South</i>	<i>North</i>
2♣	2♦	2NT	3♣
2NT	3♣	3♦	4NT
3♦	6NT	6NT	Pass
Pass			

Making 12 tricks when the Club finesse loses.

A grand slam for E-W on **Board 8**:

♠ AJ8	North	♠ K
♥ T95	West	♥ AKQ862
♦ QJ742	East	♦ AKT
♣ K6	South	♣ AQ7

West	East
Pass	2♣
2♦	2♥
3♥	4NT
5♣	5NT
6♣	7NT

East opens 2♣, of course, and although West has a super hand in the circumstances, there is no reason for him to do anything other than bid a waiting 2♦.

East bids 2♥, now what for West? 4♥ would be weak (maybe the same hand without the ♠A and ♣K), so West goes slowly with 3♥ (the **Principle of Fast Arrival** at work). That 3♥ bid, as is generally played, guarantees at least one control (Ace or King).

East tries **Roman Key Card** now, getting a response of 5♣ (1 or 4), and follows up with a **Specific King Ask** (allow us to suggest that this is better than asking for number of Kings, though it makes no difference on this particular deal). West shows the ♣K, and East can count 13 tricks assuming that the Hearts behave. As it happens, because of West's long Diamonds, there are 13 tricks in NT even if the Hearts don't come in.

However, there is a fly in the ointment: North (holding ♠T743, ♥3, ♦3, ♣JT98532) might well (perhaps should) preempt 3♣ ahead of East. Now it seems practically impossible for E-W to bid seven with any degree of confidence. The best that East can do is probably do is to cue-bid 4♣, then bid Hearts, after which West can try 6NT (thinking that the ♣K needs to be protected).

E-W have a nifty defensive ploy on **Board 23**:

Dir South Both Vul	♠ AJ7	Declarer	♠ K53
	♥ Q974		♥ 632
♠ QT86	♦ AJ	West	♦ T986
	♣ QJ84	East	♣ 652
♥ AT5		Dummy	
♦ 543	♠ 942		
♣ A97	♥ KJ8		
	♦ KQ72		
	♣ KT3		

South passes her square 12-count, North opens a 15-17 1NT, and South bids 3NT. Normally, after that auction, East will strive to lead a major, on the grounds that South

chose not to use **Stayman** and so presumably has more cards in the minors. But, fortunately for the defense, East makes the safe-looking lead of the ♦T, which is won by Declarer's Ace. To reach 9 tricks, Declarer must knock out the ♣A and ♥A, and (somewhat randomly) she leads a Heart to West's Ace.

Now for the key play! West shifts to the ♠T, diabolically setting up the Spade suit, at the expense of just one trick for Declarer. But look what happens if West lamely shifts to a low Spade ... Declarer plays low from hand and now has two Spade stops. That ♠T shift is known as a "surrounding play", recognizable by West's ♠T8 sitting over and surrounding Dummy's Nine. Down one!

Next, suppose that East's opening lead had been a low Spade. West's Queen forces Declarer's Ace, and now the defense cannot continue the Spade attack without giving Declarer a second trick in the suit.

The chance to pull off surrounding plays comes up more often than one might imagine, though often they pass by like ships in the night. Try these examples (with Declarer as North, just to be consistent with the earlier deal):

Declarer	
J43	
West	East
QT85	K76
Dummy	
A92	

In this layout, West's T8 have Dummy's Nine surrounded, so when he gets in he triumphantly tables the Ten, holding Declarer to one trick in the suit.

Declarer	
Q87	
West	East
KJ9	A432
Dummy	
T65	

This time it is West's J9 that surround Dummy's Ten, and so it comes as no surprise that West's winning play, when he breaks the suit, is to lead the Jack.

Declarer	
K87	
West	East
AQT	9432
Dummy	
J65	

The same theme and, when West shifts to the Queen, the same happy result for the defense.

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