



I've never been a shy bidder, yet most of the partners I choose still wear their biddin' britches when they play with me. At a recent Regional, I was playing with a friend who I had only partnered with once before, three years prior. Nevertheless, he is an experienced tournament veteran and expert player, so I was hopeful for good results! Because of traffic, we only had limited time to fill out a convention card before playing in our first session, an Open Pairs event. Sitting South at unfavorable vulnerability, I picked up:

♠ K 9 5   ♥ A K Q 10 7 6   ♦ 7 6   ♣ A 6

East dealt and passed (silent opponents throughout the auction). I opened 1♥, and partner bid 2♣ (natural, game forcing). I made a mildly aggressive 3♥ call, which set trump and showed some slam interest. Partner followed with 4♦ which I took as 1<sup>st</sup> round diamond control and cooperative interest in slam. I decided to risk slam. My 6♥ ended the auction. The ♠J was led, and partner tabled:

♠ Q 10 6 2   ♥ 8 3   ♦ A Q 9   ♣ K J 10 8

Ouch. Partner's 2 over 1 response was a tad optimistic... why was he cooperating with slam try? It appeared more time discussing system would have come in handy. Oh well, nothing left to do now but try. The lead was promising, assuming it wasn't singleton, but it looked like the contract would hinge on a diamond finesse.

The lead went to East's ace, and strangely a club was returned, won in dummy with the 8. Seeing no reason not to draw trumps, I cashed the ♥AK, only to see West show out on the second round. East, having started with Jxxx in hearts, had a smirk on his face, assuming he had a "sure" trump winner. Wanting equally to impress my partner and to erase East's smirk, I tried to think of a way out of this mess.

I'd read about this position before, but had never seen it at the table; I knew I'd need to shorten my own trump to have a chance. So I cashed the ♣A and the ♠K, then crossed to dummy with another spade, West showing out. I ruffed dummy's last spade and then played a diamond to the queen. When this held (phew!), I ruffed another a club, then played a diamond back to the ace, East following.

This was the final position:

♠		♠
♥		♥ J 9
♦ 9		♦
♣ K		♣
♠		♠
♥		♥ Q 10
♦ J		♦
♣ 2		♣
♠		♠
♥ Q 10		♥
♦		♦
♣		♣

My Q and 10 of trump were now over East's J and 9. 6♥ bid and made.

The full hand:

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

The bidding might have been aggressive, but although the lead and club switch looked helpful, 12 tricks were always available after any lead and any defense. This play, which I was lucky to find at the table, is called a trump coup. It requires leading a side suit through an opponent who has nothing but trumps. When the opponent is forced to ruff, the "sure" trump winner disappears.