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Still at the Puerto Vallarta Regional, we have yet another human-dealt instructional Real Deal.

In a knockout match, vulnerable against not, you hold:

♠ 6 ♥ K 6 ♦ A K 9 7 5 3 ♣ A K 4 3.

You open 1♦ and left-hand opponent bids 2♦ to show both majors. Have you and your partner discussed what to do after such interference? What does it mean if the responder now bids either 2♥ or 2♠ (the opponent's suits)? I don't like to add memory strain to those not ready to cope. If that's you, then just don't bid 2♥ or 2♠ and skip to the next paragraph. If you want to invest some time and memory, here is one popular method. Bidding 3♦ (raising partner) means you have about 8–10 points and support. Bidding 3♣ (the remaining suit) is natural, but not forcing. That leaves bids in the opponent's two suits to show corresponding stronger hands in the other two suits. So, here, 2♥ could be used to show the big club hand and 2♠ to show a bigger diamond hand (limit raise or better).

Let's say your partner shows a limit-raise or better in diamonds and RHO jumps to 4♠. Slam is certainly in the picture, maybe even a grand slam. You bid 4NT and partner an-

swers 5♥ to show two key cards, but no ♦ Q. Maybe seven will make, but there is no good way to find out. You meekly settle for only 6♦ and you receive the lead of the ♥ Q, won in dummy with the ace.

♠ A 7 4  
♥ A 2  
♦ J 6 4 2  
♣ J 7 5 2

♠ 6  
♥ K 6  
♦ A K 9 7 5 3  
♣ A K 4 3

If both minors behave well, you might indeed make seven, but that's not your concern in six. How should you begin the play?

The clubs can be dealt with later, but for now, how should you tackle trumps? If they are 2–1, you have no problems. What if RHO started with all three missing diamonds? You can pick up the suit if you run the jack on the first round, but that would be disastrous if it lost to the singleton (or doubleton) queen offside. That would be a big (too big) play, and anti-percentage. Still, it can't hurt to try the ♦ J from dummy. You never know what fish you might catch on your line. If RHO did begin with Q–10–8, he might cover. Then, when LHO shows out, all is revealed and you can cross back to dummy to pick up the suit. (If RHO follows low, you will go up with the ace, as originally planned.) It's a free play (any time you have this 10-card combination), so you win the opening heart lead in dummy and advance the ♦ J. RHO plays the queen and you win the ace, LHO following.

So, it was a waste of time and mental energy to play the ♦ J, but it was good technique. You draw the other

trump (LHO following) and it is time to focus on the clubs. By now, with LHO known to have both majors and a doubleton diamond, he will be short in clubs. No problem. Before playing clubs, you can easily strip the side suits. Play the ♠ A and ruff a spade. Cash your ♥ K and cross in diamonds to ruff the last spade.

Now that all the majors and opponents' trumps are gone, it is a simple matter to lay down one top club (all follow low) and then play a low club towards dummy. LHO shows out, but you play low from dummy and East must win and either play from his club queen or give you a ruff-sluff. Either way, you score 1370 and a 12–IMP gain because the other table played in 3NT, making five.

♠ A 7 4  
♥ A 2  
♦ J 6 4 2  
♣ J 7 5 2

♠ K 10 5 3 2		♠ Q J 9 8
♥ Q J 10 5 4	N	♥ 9 8 7 3
♦ 10 8	W E	♦ Q
♣ 9	S	♣ Q 10 8 6

♠ 6  
♥ K 6  
♦ A K 9 7 5 3  
♣ A K 4 3

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