

Don't Spoil Your Partner's Brilliancy

By Gabriel Chagas

From time to time, sitting at the bridge table, you will get the opportunity to rise to the occasion. This does not always succeed because there is also a partner who must understand what is going on. Everybody knows the situation: you underlead an ace against a trump contract, and your partner looks a little surprised when his king wins the trick. This is an awkward moment for your partner, whose first duty is to discover why you under led your ace.

South Deals
None Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1♠	Pass	2♦	Pass
2NT	Pass	3♦	Pass
3 NT	All pass		

North-South play five-card majors, the 2NT rebid as less than 15 points and three diamonds as forcing. Partner leads the three of clubs, dummy discards a small heart, you play the king of clubs as East, and declarer takes the ace. The prospects are gloomy. If declarer has three diamonds, then eight tricks are already in the basket. South plays the three of diamonds, your partner contributes the queen and, to your surprise, declarer plays low from dummy! Are you in a meeting of wizards? It is impossible that partner has a singleton diamond because, in that case, declarer would have played the king. Nevertheless there is not much time to think because, in the next split second, your partner has put the four of spades on the table. What is going on? Why not another club? The mystery deepens when you put on the queen, and it wins the trick (declarer playing the three)! The ten of clubs is already in your hand but ... wait, what would have happened if West had played a small diamond to the second trick? Apparently, declarer has only two diamonds, and is prepared to give you a diamond trick. So you would have gained the lead with the jack and then, well, which card would you have played? The ten of clubs, of course. Ah! Your partner played the queen of diamonds in order to play a spade, not a club. He did not want a club continuation.

He must have promising cards in spades, and know that the club suit offers no future. As the light dawns, you return a spade. And this was the full lay-out:

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

Wave a flag for West playing the queen of diamonds! He knew declarer had the queen of clubs and the ace of hearts, and therefore nine tricks if you continued a club. So he found a way to gain the lead himself to make the killing switch. But what would have happened if, when you won the spade, you had thoughtlessly switched back to clubs? West would have slipped from his chair, and would have been ready for the mental hospital, to spend his days regretting this waste of beauty!

My BOLS bridge tip is this:

When you partner an unusual play, be careful not to spoil his brilliancy