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Bridge Tips Tannah Hirsch

12/30/2009 East-West vulnerable. South deals.

	NORTH Void J 10 6 A K 7 6 4 3 2 K 6 4	
WEST J 5 4 3 Q 8 7 3 2 9 Q J 9		EAST 6 2 A K 9 5 4 Q J 10 10 8 7
	SOUTH A K Q 10 9 8 7 Void 8 5 A 5 3 2	

SOUTH 1 Spade 3 Spade 6 Spade	WEST Pass Pass All Pass	NORTH 2 Diamond 4 Diamond	EAST Pass Pass
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Opening lead: Queen of

There are circumstances where safety plays are automatic. The play of this hand should be routine these days, given the literature on the subject.

Six diamonds is a superior contract, depending on little more than a 3-1 trump break. Although a really bad trump break combined with a heart lead would have wreaked havoc with the spade slam, we cannot blame South for insisting on playing in the major.

West led the queen of clubs, and a careless declarer would be defeated by winning in the wrong hand. Since discards are needed on dummy's diamonds, South wisely won the opening lead in hand to preserve an entry to the table. Three high trumps were cashed to reveal the good and bad news – trumps broke normally and West held the length, but the jack did not drop.

If declarer goes after the diamonds by cashing the ace and king, he will be defeated. West ruffs the second diamond and declarer is an entry short to establish and cash the diamonds. But declarer handled the situation perfectly. After leading a diamond to the king, declarer returned to hand with a heart ruff to lead another diamond.

Since ruffing on air would not help the defenders' cause, West discarded a heart. Dummy's ace won and declarer set up the suit with a ruff and, whether West overruffed or not, the slam was home.

At the table, West sluffed another club. Declarer exited with a trump, presenting West with his trump winner, but the king of clubs was still in dummy as an entry to the good diamonds.

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