



CARD BY CARD

ADVENTURES AT THE BRIDGE TABLE

ROY HUGHES
AUTHOR OF *BUILDING A BIDDING SYSTEM*



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Roy Hughes

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FOREWORD

Terence Reese made popular the ‘over-the-shoulder’ style by which the author invites the reader to play hands that he played, reliving the decisions that he took at the table. From experience, I know that this is a challenging but rewarding format to get right, and I am pleased to say that Roy Hughes has done a fine job.

Roy has chosen a good collection of deals, which are both interesting individually and hang together as a set. He provides readers with first-class analysis and has a knack for coming to grips with the key point of the deal. His style is diplomatic and honest, and he puts the reader in a relaxed frame of mind.

I like the fact that he owns up to events that did not quite take the desired turn at the table. Much of the material is original and, when he does use a deal that has previously appeared in print, he uses a wide variety of sources and gives suitable credits.

The deals come from a diverse group of competitions and settings, which adds to the interest, as does the slight variation of bidding systems in use. He explains anything out of the ordinary, so do not worry if you only play socially or if SAYC is all you are familiar with.

On most of the deals, the author, and hence you the reader, end up as declarer. This reflects the fact that most people prefer to play rather than defend. Also, speaking from personal experience, it is simply easier to combine bidding decisions with play decisions than defensive decisions.

If you want to derive maximum educational benefit from the book, you should pause and a stop to think whenever you reach a decision point. If, however, you just want to sit back and enjoy the deals and narrative like I did, who is going to argue?

Julian Pottage
October 2005

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This is a collection of deals from a number of sources. Some are from my personal exploits at the card table, and only a few of these have been seen in print. Others are from high-level competition, and still others are from my extensive collection of books and magazines. Some of these may be familiar to the reader. For the most part, I have included only deals where I felt I had something of interest to add to what has already been written; there is the occasional hand from an old book that I included simply because it was beautiful and might possibly be new to the reader.

While this is a book mostly concerned with card play, inferences from the bidding are often important. Many of the deals arose in rubber bridge at the St. Clair Bridge Club in Toronto, and in absence of indication to the contrary the reader should assume the old-fashioned methods in use there: four-card majors with a strong one notrump opening, Stayman and Blackwood, penalty doubles of overcalls. Others come from England, particularly the rubber bridge clubs of London, and I will mention use of the weak notrump or anything specific to the setting that the reader may need to know. On occasion, I am playing with a regular partner, and we may then be playing our unpublished strong club methods with four-card majors and strong notrumps.

Unless specifically stated, defensive signaling is what you might have encountered in 1950: fourth best, king from ace-king, high to encourage or suggest an even number of cards in the suit. Or, as Michael Courtney once said to me, “our carding is like your grandmother’s”.

Anyone familiar with the classic volumes by Terence Reese (such as *Play Bridge With Reese*) will see that I have copied that author’s format of presentation, using a first-person narrative. I made that choice with some reluctance, and I hope the reader does not find it pretentious. My justification is that I know of no better way to present the material. I have maintained the first person usage even for the hands I was not involved in; it just seems to work better that way. Sometimes there will

be clues. If the story starts “Playing in an early round in the Bermuda Bowl”, well, I have not as yet played in the Bermuda Bowl. When the facts are not as presented, I own up afterwards, except for insignificant fabricated details such as exact spot cards, when no hand records were available.

The reader who wants a good mental workout should stop frequently to consider the best line of play. Obviously, one good time for that is when the dummy is presented. Another is at the end of a paragraph. I avoid questions like “What would you do now?”, relying instead on a pace of presentation that allows time for thought. At times the narrative presents analysis that at the table should properly have been done earlier, to allow for playing in good tempo. My guide here is to do whatever seems best for the reader.

I would like to thank Suzanne Hocking and Ray Lee of Master Point Press, and Ron Bishop for their invaluable assistance. I would like to extend thanks also to Julian Pottage for his kind foreword, and to my numerous friends who made useful suggestions and caught, I hope, most of my blunders. A particular vote of thanks in this regard goes to Peter Winkler.

I would like to thank also the authors whose material I have borrowed. All such material came from books, newspapers and magazines I have thoroughly enjoyed. Occasionally, and sometimes with the benefit of thirty years or so to think about it, I present what I consider an improvement in an argument. At other times, I just have more space than the original author to expand upon an interesting deal.

Roy Hughes
Toronto
August 2005

MOUNT ROYAL CROSSRUFF

Playing in the 2002 Rosenblum Teams in Montreal, we are facing an experienced American squad when I pick up

♠ A K Q 8 3 ♥ 7 3 2 ♦ — ♣ A K 9 5 4

Both sides are vulnerable, and I am first to speak. What to open with 5-5 in the blacks has long been a source of controversy; our agreements call for **one spade**. My left-hand opponent jumps to **three diamonds**, described on our opponents' card as intermediate. Partner raises me to **three spades**, and East passes. Slam is possible opposite a suitable hand, particularly one with a good club fit, so I show my second suit by bidding **four clubs**. Partner retreats to **four spades**, ending the bidding, which has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♦	3♠	pass	1♠
pass	4♠	all pass	4♣

West leads the ace of diamonds, consistent with a holding of ace-king in their methods. I see that partner has not been shy:

♦ A

♠ J 10 9
 ♥ A 6 5 4
 ♦ 10 6 5 2
 ♣ 10 2

□

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

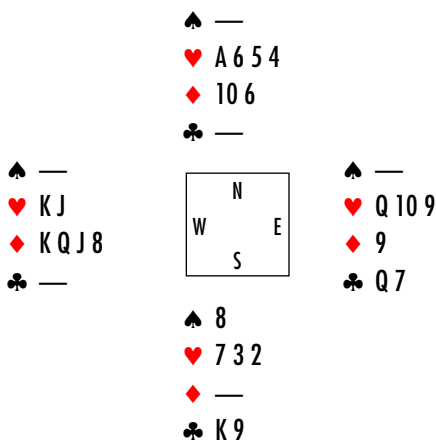
If I can establish the clubs, maintain control, and draw trumps, I will make an overtrick, losing just two hearts. That is easily done with favorable splits. With clubs 3-3, for example, I can ruff the third round and draw trumps even if they are 4-1, thanks to my eight. With clubs 4-2, though, I am short on entries to hand if trumps are 4-1. I can ruff the third round, come to a trump, and ruff the fourth round, but that exhausts the trumps in dummy and I have to ruff a diamond to hand. So I won't make the long club if trumps are 4-1, but I will make ten tricks, scoring two ruffs in dummy to go along with five trumps in hand, the ace and king of clubs, and the ace of hearts.

Clubs could be 5-1, though. If I play off the ace-king and someone ruffs, a trump return will hold me to seven trumps, a club and a heart — one down. The good trumps in dummy are giving me an idea. If I can score all three trumps in dummy, I need only one top club. I wonder if this is one of those hands where I need to play low on the second round of clubs. Suppose either defender wins the second club, his partner following. The defense will then be in a quandary. If they shift to a trump, I can win in hand, ruff the clubs good, and draw trumps for ten tricks. If they do not shift to a trump, I can score ten tricks on a cross-ruff. Things won't be as rosy if clubs are 5-1, but at least I will have avoided having my king of clubs ruffed.

Putting this plan into action, I ruff the diamond lead and cash the ace of clubs, drawing the eight from West. I continue with a low club, and West stops to consider. Eventually he throws a diamond. East wins the jack and returns a diamond, which I ruff. Now I ruff a club, and when the ace of hearts stands up, I can claim on a high crossruff. The full deal was:

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

At Trick 3, the defense had two other options, futile in different ways. East, on winning the jack of clubs, could have returned a trump. Declarer wins in hand and trumps a club. Now declarer doesn't have the entries to hand to ruff a second club and keep control, so he draws trumps, arriving at this position:



Now declarer ducks a heart, and the defense is powerless to prevent declarer from ruffing out East's last diamond, then throwing him in with a heart to lead away from the queen of clubs.

Alternatively, West could protect his partner's clubs by ruffing at Trick 3, and returning a trump. That both kills the above ending and holds me to two club ruffs, but with the defensive ruff coming in the long trump hand, I can just manage to ruff both club losers and draw trumps. The king of clubs takes the last trick.



TAKING OUT DUMMY

We are practicing for another run at the national championship when I pick up

♠ A Q 5 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 7 3 ♣ Q 10 9 6 5

Both sides are vulnerable, and the dealer on my left opens **two spades**, weak. Partner passes and the next hand bids **three spades**. Most people play that as a sign-off; that's what I assume is happening here.

The normal action is surely to pass, and that is what I am going to do here. I don't like it one bit, though. I have a five-card suit with good interior spots and a double stopper in the opponents' suit. I suspect spades are divided 6-2-2-3 around the table, as partner might have stretched to act with a singleton. Declaring three notrump, I might be able to keep the opposing hands isolated, and make it even with considerably less than the common yardstick of 25 high card points.

Be that as it may, I pass, in tempo, and three spades is passed out. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3♠	all pass	2♠

Partner leads the two of spades, and we see dummy has made a tactical call:

	♠ 6 4										
	♥ K Q 10 6										
	♦ K Q 10 9 5										
	♣ 7 3										
♠ 2	<table border="1"> <tr> <td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr> <td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr> <td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 5 ♥ A J 5 ♦ 7 3 ♣ Q 10 9 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										

Partner and I play upside-down count and attitude. Declarer calls for a small spade, and I have to think. I don't really want to be on play yet. I can play a club through, but it would be better after dummy's other trump is gone, when we might be able to win the third round. Fortunately, if I duck the opening lead, declarer will have to win in hand, and he won't be able to continue trumps immediately. That's the course I decide on. I hope partner hasn't led low from jack and one. Declarer wins in hand with the eight, and then leads the four of diamonds to the two and queen. Now he plays the six of spades. I don't want to leave myself without a trump to ruff with, so I go up with the ace, collecting declarer's three and partner's seven.

I had been intending to play clubs, but I see something better. Partner seems to have four diamonds. If I lead a diamond to his ace, he can switch to a heart. Declarer will play high, and I can kill the dummy by playing low. If by chance partner has three diamonds (we don't always give count), he can give me a diamond ruff, and we can then set up a club while I still have the ace of hearts.

I don't see anything wrong with this, so I play a diamond to partner's ace. He now plays the eight of hearts, declarer calls for the king, and I play low. In dummy for the last time, declarer tries the queen of diamonds, but I ruff, and we eventually score two hearts and a club, for one down. This was the full deal:

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

I rewrote this story to have a happy ending. In real life, partner went wrong after winning the ace of diamonds, playing a club. That was a shame — it would have been a very pretty defense. The duck of the trump ace at Trick 1 was an important move, but one that could have been thwarted. On the lead of the two of spades, declarer must play dummy's six. Then if East ducks, declarer retains the lead in dummy, and can continue to draw trumps. He will then make his contract of three spades if he chooses to finesse West for the jack of diamonds. The deal is quite instructive at double dummy. The defense can prevail on any lead but the deuce of spades.



A GOOD PUSH

Playing in the 2000 semifinals of our national championship, only the opponents are vulnerable when I hold as South

♠ A J 9 5 ♥ K Q 3 ♦ K Q 8 7 2 ♣ 5

Partner is the dealer and opens **one heart**. In our methods, this shows four or more hearts and is limited to 16 high card points. East passes, and I start my complex hand with **two diamonds**. The opponents apparently have nothing to say, and partner raises me to **three diamonds**. For now I will show the heart support with **three hearts**. Partner now bids **four clubs**. I didn't need club values from partner, but my cards are very suitable. I'm not going to bid Blackwood, because two aces from partner may not be enough. Partner may take four diamonds as forcing, but I don't wish to risk getting passed. I decide to show the spade control, and let things unfold, so I bid **four spades**. Partner now bids **four notrump**. That is forward-going, not Blackwood by a limited hand in the middle of a cuebidding sequence. Since I have good values, I go straight to **six diamonds**, and everyone passes. The bidding has been

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♥	pass	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	4♣	pass	4♠
pass	4NT	pass	6♦
all pass			

West leads the jack of clubs, and partner produces a suitable dummy:

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

The issue is going to be handling the spade losers. I can't afford to lose a club finesse, obviously, so I win the first trick with the ace. Now, can I afford to draw any trumps? All will be fine if they divide 2-2, but if I draw two rounds and get a showout, the defense could play a third round when they come in with a spade. Perhaps I could afford one round, but I want to leave the ace in the dummy in case I need to over-ruff the jack, and if I play off the king of trumps I will be in the wrong hand to start spades. I am going to take the slight risk involved in losing the first round of spades, which must be better than playing ace and another, which risks an overruff with the jack on the third round.

I lead a spade down to the nine, which West takes with the ten. He continues with the ten of clubs. It certainly doesn't look like the queen will win this trick — should I keep it for later? It looks like I may need a squeeze if ruffing both spades is too much to handle, so I play low on the club and ruff in hand. Now it's time to start trumps, so I lead the king of diamonds, on which West discards a club.

Now I can't ruff two spades and still pick up East's jack of trumps. However, with all the menaces, the squeeze prospects are good. I unblock the ten of trumps from dummy, cash the ace of spades, all following, and lead a third spade, West following low. The missing spades are the king and queen. It is very likely safe to ruff low, as West probably would have led a spade from king-queen-ten. However, there is no advantage in doing so, and so I ruff a spade with the ace as East follows with the king. Now I draw trumps, starting with the nine. This is the position before the last trump is drawn:

♠ —
 ♥ A 8 6 5
 ♦ —
 ♣ Q

 ♠ J
 ♥ K Q 3
 ♦ Q
 ♣ —

If anyone has four hearts, it rates to be West, and as long as he has the queen of spades, or an improbable king of clubs, I will make it. Sure enough, when I play the queen of diamonds he is squeezed in the majors, the full deal being:

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

When we compare scores, I see that on this board our opponents achieved the same result. The same contract, same opening lead, and same play, card for card. That was disappointing at the time, since we needed points, but now I remember the hand fondly as a good push.



A WAY OVER

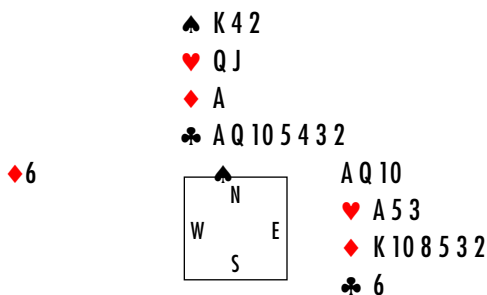
I am East. We are vulnerable against not in a local team game. Dealer on my right opens **one club**, and I hold:

♠ A Q 10 ♥ A 5 3 ♦ K 10 8 5 3 2 ♣ 6

Our style is to prefer an overcall to a double when holding a six-card suit, unless the hand is overwhelmingly strong. So I bid **one diamond**, despite the good major-suit support. South bids **one heart**, and partner jumps to **three diamonds**. That is weak in our methods. North **doubles**, which is not for penalties but suggests extra values and offense, and I have a decision to make. It is hard to judge what we might make. Four trumps to the ace, a singleton heart, the jack of spades: these are things that could help us take a lot of tricks, but partner doesn't have to have them. I could consult partner, perhaps with a redouble, or I could pass and await developments. Either of these courses may allow our opponents room to judge their cards better. I decide to jump to **five diamonds**. South bids **five hearts**, which comes back to me. I have nothing to say to this. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	1♦	1♥
3♦	dbl	5♦	5♥
all pass			

Partner leads the six of diamonds, and I await dummy with interest.



We play fourth-best leads and upside-down count and attitude. Declarer takes the first trick with the ace in dummy, following with the four from hand. Next comes the heart queen. Seeing no reason to jump in, I play low and declarer overtakes with the king as partner follows with the six. Declarer ruffs the diamond queen in dummy, as partner plays the seven, and plays a club to the six, king and nine. Next comes the ten of hearts, the five of spades, and a club from dummy. I win the ace. What now?

It is clear both from the bidding and partner's carding that declarer is out of diamonds. If I play a diamond, declarer will ruff and draw the last trump. If he has a club, he will have the rest of the tricks. If not, he will be two down, but it seems he will have a club, as partner would not play the nine from jack-nine fourth. We do not always give count, but partner would have no reason to falsecard here.

Declarer has seven hearts, two diamonds, and at least two clubs. My only chance is to get to partner's hand for a club ruff, and the only way I can see is for him to hold the jack of spades. I also will need declarer to have two spades. I play the queen of spades. Declarer wins the king in dummy and leads a second spade. It will look bad if he wins the jack of spades, but I need a way over and I play low. Partner overtakes with the jack and gives me a club ruff, for one down. The full deal is:

♠ K 4 2
♥ Q J
♦ A
♣ A Q 10 5 4 3 2

♠ J 8 6 5 3
♥ 6
♦ J 9 7 6
♣ J 9 8

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A Q 10
♥ A 5 3
♦ K 10 8 5 3 2
♣ 6

♠ 97
♥ K 10 9 8 7 4 2
♦ Q 4
♣ K 7

NOT QUITE PSYCHIC

I am South in a team-of-four league match, neither vulnerable, and hold a strong hand:

♠ K 9 ♥ K 5 ♦ A 10 ♣ A K Q J 10 5 2

Not only that, but partner opens the bidding as dealer, with one spade. The thing about this, though, is that at equal or favorable vulnerability, as dealer, we open 0-4 point hands. So, the odds are good that partner has nothing. Fortunately, we have a gadget for this situation.¹

I bid **three notrump**, which asks partner to pass with 0-4, and give a count of aces if he has a real opening. I am expecting to play there, but partner surprises me with four hearts, showing two aces. Well! Seven clubs, two spades, two hearts and the ace of diamonds adds up to twelve tricks. A thirteenth can come from the queen of spades, or king of diamonds, or queen of hearts in a three-card or longer suit. Partner is likely to have one of those, but he doesn't have to. In our style, partner will have a good 12 or more if balanced, but may have less with good shape. In that case, he will have five or more spades, and if we play in clubs, there will be the extra chance of establishing them with a ruff, with the ace of hearts for entry. There is also the possibility of ruffing a diamond, or finding another entry in clubs.

With so many chances, I am going to bid seven of something, and I am leaning towards playing in clubs. Playing in notrump avoids a defensive ruff, but if East doubles to suggest a spade lead, I will run. If there are thirteen tricks, seven notrump is 2 IMPs better if our counterparts play seven clubs or six notrump, but no IMPs better if they play in six clubs. If I could enlist partner's aid, I would, but we have no agreement about continuations after the ace-showing response, so I am not going to risk bidding anything except a straightforward **seven clubs**.

1. This psychic control would not be legal in ACBL play. The St. Clair Team-of-Four League has always taken a tolerant view of conventions and treatments, provided they are announced and explained properly.

Maybe partner can bid seven notrump with extra values. Everyone passes, though, so the bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♠	pass	3NT
pass	4♥	pass	7♣
all pass			

West leads the nine of clubs and I see that partner's opening bid, while not quite psychic, is not so robust, either:

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

At first glance, I need either spades 3-3, or queen-jack doubleton, or one of a complex array of squeeze possibilities. The first task is to draw trumps, and I might as well play an extra one or two rounds to force the defense to make some pitches before I reveal my spade holding. I can afford four rounds of trumps without putting dummy under pressure. Both follow to the first two clubs. On the third, West throws a low heart (encouraging). On the fourth trump, West throws another heart, and East throws a diamond. The position is:

♠ A 10 6 5

♥ A 10 4

♦ Q 8

♣ —



♠ K 9

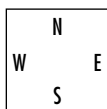
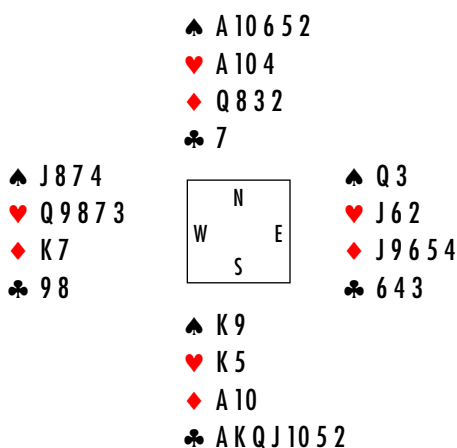
♥ K 5

♦ A 10

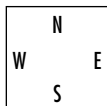
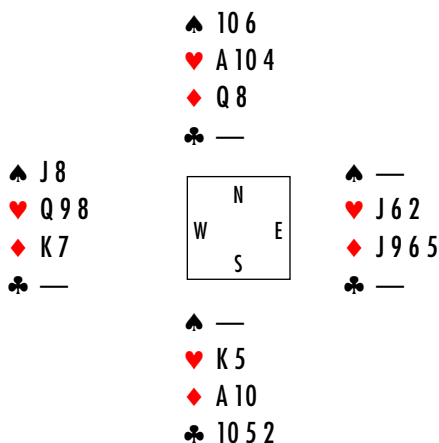
♣ 10 5 2

I have to decide whether to play a fifth trump now, with no easy pitch from the table, or test spades, or perhaps cash the ace of diamonds. When does it cost to test the spades now? It makes it easier for the defense, certainly — for all they know I could have a small singleton or void in spades. Apart from that, I think it costs the contract if West has the diamond king and the only spade guard. If I knew that to be the case, I would squeeze him by cashing all the red tops and running the clubs. It seems too extreme, though, to give up on an even spade division. If I play a fifth club and discard a diamond, should it be a low one, or the queen? The queen, I think, for I don't see much value in keeping a bare queen, and if I keep a low card there may be reason to finesse the ten in the endgame.

I can't work all this out. I decide to test the spades, without forcing a premature pitch from dummy. On the third spade, East throws a heart. That's a disappointment, and not just because the spades did not split: I may also have lost the spade-diamond squeeze. I have a few chances yet. West may have the queen-jack of hearts, in which case he will be squeezed, or East may have the king-jack of diamonds, when both of them will be squeezed. I cash the clubs, throwing the diamonds from table, and just watch for the jack of spades and king-jack of diamonds. West throws two more hearts — that's a lot of hearts! — as East pitches diamonds. I cash the ace of diamonds, throwing the now-useless spade as everyone follows small. There are only three hearts out, and when I cash the king and ace they come tumbling down, the full deal having been:

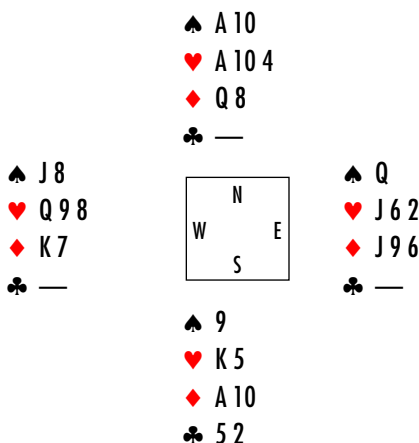


Here was the position as I led the third round of spades from dummy:



East erred by throwing a heart, and now his partner was inevitably squeezed in the majors. Suppose, instead, East throws a diamond. I ruff and play a trump. Now West can let go a heart, and I throw a diamond from dummy. Superficially, I have the material for a double squeeze: a spade menace over West, a heart threat against East, and an entry in the middle suit, diamonds. But the timing is wrong. The ace of hearts is the last entry to dummy, so I have to leave it there while I run the clubs. That leaves West with hearts to pitch, and dummy is squeezed on the last club.

On the actual lie of the cards, the only way to make seven clubs legitimately is to pretend to be in seven notrump. There is a simple squeeze in spades and diamonds, of course, since the king of diamonds is on the left, but we don't need that. The king of spades can be cashed, not that it matters, before running clubs. Here is the position with two clubs to go:



West, holding three suits, is squeezed on the second-last club. Suppose he lets go a heart. I throw a diamond from dummy, and then cash the ace and king of hearts. Now the last club squeezes West out of his diamond guard, and I can throw the ten of spades from dummy. A spade to the ace now catches East in hearts and diamonds.

Another line works on the lie of the cards. Declarer cashes the next-to-last club, on which West throws a heart, dummy and East throwing diamonds. Now declarer can lead the last club, throwing the queen of diamonds from dummy. East must keep hearts, and he can't throw the queen of spades without exposing his partner to a finesse. So he relinquishes diamonds. Now the ace and king of hearts squeeze West in spades and diamonds. That line would fail, though, if the queen and eight of spades were switched.

The above position illustrates a compound squeeze, and the tens and the queen of diamonds are not required for its operation. Mentally replace them with spot cards, then check out what happens when West gives up diamonds on the second last club. Declarer plays the last club, throwing the last diamond from dummy. Now the ace of diamonds

squeezes West out of his heart guard, and a spade to the ace squeezes East in hearts and diamonds.

The standard compound squeeze requires a suit, like spades here, that is held by only one defender, and the menace must lie behind the guard. Two other suits, hearts and diamonds here, are held by both defenders. The running of the free suit produces a triple squeeze on the second-last winner (here the squeeze takes effect on the third-last winner, because of the ruffing threat in spades). One of two double squeezes follows, depending on what suit is surrendered. That is often where the difficulties arise, because all the entry and timing requirements for both potential double squeezes must be met.



MAKE NOTE

The opponents are vulnerable in this deal from the local team-of-four league. West, the dealer on my left, passes, and partner opens **one diamond**. This is limited to 16 high card points, and could be short. The next hand overcalls **one spade**, and I hold:

♠ 10 ♥ K 10 9 8 3 ♦ 6 3 ♣ A K J 6 4

I could double, which with us promises both unbid suits, but it doesn't show either the strength or the fifth heart, so I bid a simple **two hearts**. West raises to **two spades**, and partner supports me with **three hearts**. East continues with **three spades**, and it's my call again. I am certainly worth four hearts, but what will we do when the opponents continue to four spades? Perhaps neither will — they seem to have made their bids. However, in this partnership I can bid **four clubs**, which is not a slam try but simply shows clubs. I will then be in a position to let partner decide what to do over four spades. This eventuality does not arise, however, and partner takes me back to **four hearts** and everyone has had their say. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	1♠	2♥
2♠	3♥	3♠	4♣
pass	4♥	all pass	

The lead is the spade queen, and a shapely dummy appears:

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

West wins the queen of spades, and when his partner encourages, plays another. How am I going to make this? I can play a crossruff, for which I will need to score all eight trumps separately to go with the ace and king of clubs. Alternatively, I can play to establish one hand, either mine or dummy's. To establish clubs, I would need to ruff two of them in the dummy, and find clubs 4-4 or the queen third. Being short of entries to my hand, I would have to use dummy's high trumps for ruffing, like this: ruff the spade, ruff a club high, ruff a spade, ruff a club high, finesse the ten of hearts, finding East with jack and one trump. That's possible, but not at all likely. It must be better to play on diamonds, either to set up dummy or to prepare a crossruff, for which I need more cards to ruff in hand. I trump the spade at Trick 2 and lead a diamond. West examines it briefly but plays low, and I play the queen from dummy. East wins and plays a third spade.

West's opening lead was the unsupported queen. I can't imagine he's out of spades, though. Sometimes people raise on doubleton honor, but surely East would have bid four spades with seven of them. I ruff and play my other diamond. West looks at this for a while, and then plays the ten, letting his partner ruff dummy's jack. East thinks a bit, then switches to a low club, and it's time for me to consider what to do:

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

If the remaining trumps are 2-2, I don't need any of my clubs — I can ruff the club in dummy, ruff the diamonds good, and draw trumps ending on table. If trumps don't split, what can I do? Let's see. I place East with six spades, for his three spade bid, although I suppose he might have only five. He had a singleton diamond honor; was it the ace or the king? Embarrassingly, I don't remember. It didn't matter to me at the time, but it would be nice to know now. I'll make note next time. If he ruffed from a doubleton trump holding, then he will have four clubs. If these include the queen, I can win the jack of clubs, cash the ace and king, trump a club in dummy, a diamond in hand, and have three top trumps to finish. However, if East has only three clubs he will overruff dummy. He will probably drop the queen of clubs, the card he is known to hold, whether he has three or four. Another thought strikes me. Suppose I put in the jack of clubs. It would then be a good play for West, with 3-2-3-5 and the queen of clubs, to play low. He would see that playing to bring in the diamonds was slated to work, and might offer me a chance to go down playing to ruff the fourth club.

Can East really have four clubs? If he has, as I suspect, six spades, that would give him something like:

♠ A K x x x x ♥ x x ♦ A ♣ Q x x x

Surely he would bid four spades with that. This has taken a long time. I decide to bank on the remaining trumps dividing evenly. In that case, I won't need the club finesse, but taking it won't cost, either. I put in the jack of clubs, which wins. I then proceed to ruff a club, ruff a diamond,

and take the queen and ace of hearts. Trumps split, and the diamonds are good, so I make four hearts. The full deal was:

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

This was not a difficult hand to play, but there are a number of interesting points we can take from it. The most important, for me, is to pay attention to things that maybe don't seem to matter at the time but may be a crucial part of figuring out the puzzle later. What works best for me is to make an early guess as to what the opponents have, even if there isn't much to go on. Then I can compare what actually happens with my tentative model.

Years ago a memory researcher conducted a famous experiment. Subjects were tested on their ability to recall the position of pieces on a chessboard. Half the subjects were chess experts, and half were not. Half of the positions that the subjects were asked to recall were "real" positions, arising from play between experts. The other half were totally random, like the result of dumping the box of chessmen on the board and then straightening up the pieces. What the researcher discovered was that the experts, predictably, outscored the non-experts handily in the recall of the real positions. Less predictable was that the experts had almost no advantage in recalling the random positions. The mind remembers better when it is actively engaged with the data to be remembered. So if you want to remember spot cards, think about what they might mean, and do it all the time, even on the easy deals. Then the mechanism will work even when the mind has many other demands on it.



FOUR TENS

Long, long ago (I'm getting this deal from a dusty carton of old notes and clippings), I held

♠ 10 6 5 4 ♥ 10 5 3 2 ♦ 10 3 ♣ 10 6 4

Fortunately this is not for money. Dealer passes on my right, I pass, and West opens **one heart** on my left. Partner **doubles**, East passes, and perforce I bid **one spade**. West passes, partner cuebids **two hearts**, and East passes. Now what? My partner believes in valuing tens at half a point each, and there is no denying that some of mine could be useful. The ten of hearts, in particular, could combine with heart values to create an essential stopper in notrump. However, a balanced zero-count is just that, and I bid just **two spades**. Everyone passes. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	pass
1 ♥	dbl	pass	1 ♠
pass	2 ♥	pass	2 ♠
all pass			

West leads the heart king, and I mentally thank partner for not going on, despite his 23 high card points.

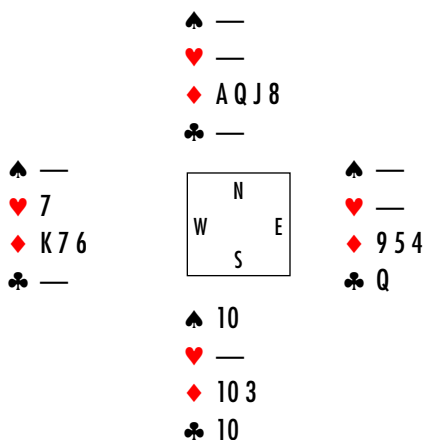
♥K

♠ A K 2
♥ J 9 6
♦ A Q J 8
♣ A K J

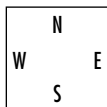
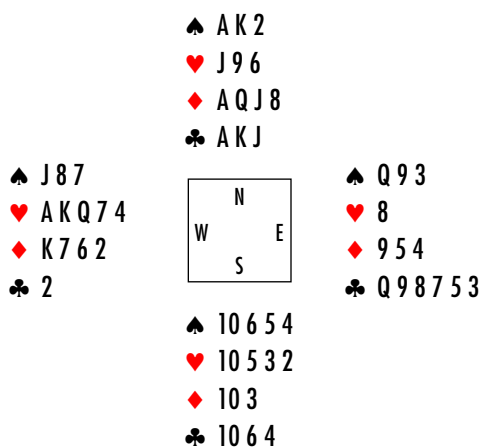
♠ 10 6 5 4
♥ 10 5 3 2
♦ 10 3
♣ 10 6 4

Everyone follows to the first heart, and West continues with the ace and queen. East throws two clubs. Now West plays a fourth heart, and I have my first decision. I decide to throw the jack of clubs. East ruffs with the three and puts me on table with a club. I see nothing better to do than cash the ace and king of trumps, East following with the nine and queen while West follows low.

The diamond finesse will be right, but I can't reach my hand to take it. I play off the other top club, and West pitches a diamond. I exit with a trump. West has to win and then lead in the following position:



West leads the last heart, putting dummy under pressure. If I discard the low diamond, I can ruff in hand, finesse a diamond and cash the ace, but the defense will win the last trick. Instead, in the diagrammed position I throw the *queen* of diamonds, and East is caught in an odd position. He throws a diamond, and I ruff in hand. Now the ten of diamonds is covered by the king and ace, and East's nine falls under the jack. The last trick, my eighth, is won by the eight of diamonds. The full deal was:



Declarer really didn't have to do much here, other than stay awake — bridge is like that, sometimes. The end position was amusing: the tens all had their roles to play.



HEROIC TRUMP

As West in a local team game, all vulnerable, I hold

♠ A 6 5 3 ♥ K J 7 ♦ J 10 9 8 5 4 ♣ —

My partner deals and passes, and South on my right opens **one heart**. I don't hold much, I know, with a bad suit and good defense, but I like the pattern and can't stop myself from bidding **two diamonds**. After a pass on my left, partner bids **two spades**. We play transfer methods suggested by Jeff Rubens, and partner's bid shows clubs. South **doubles**, and holding four spades, I am quite content to pass. North removes to **three hearts**, and everybody has suddenly had enough. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1♥
2♦	pass	2♠	dbl
pass	3♥	all pass	

I lead the diamond jack, and look at the following:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

Dummy plays low, partner the deuce (low encourages), and declarer wins the king. He now plays the spade king. Rightly or wrongly, I duck that, and partner plays the jack. Declarer continues insistently with the spade queen, which I take as partner plays the nine. What now?

Partner seems to have ♠J109, leaving declarer ♠KQ42. This play of the spade queen looks odd. Apparently declarer, with two spade losers to ruff in dummy, wishes to avoid a trump shift from East. He has placed me with the heart king for my overcall. If we allow two spade ruffs in dummy, I will later score two trump tricks. If I shift to a low trump, declarer scores only one ruff, but I get only one later trump trick. It may better to lead the king. I will still have a trump trick, and if declarer uses the trump queen in dummy for ruffing, my seven may come in handy. I see nothing wrong with this, so I shift to the king of hearts, and declarer wins the ace. He trumps a spade in dummy and leads the club jack, but partner wins the ace and gives me a ruff. I lead the six of spades now, which is high, but partner is thinking hard and ruffs it, to play a club through. That is good play, potentially promoting the ten of hearts, but unnecessary since I have the jack of hearts for the setting trick. The full deal was:

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

The defense would have been easier if partner took his ace of diamonds at Trick 1, but the position was difficult for him in that we lead jack from both J10 and KJ10. As the play went, the shift to the king of hearts was necessary, and left declarer with no resource. If, instead of leading a club, he had ruffed a diamond to hand to play trumps, my

six of spades would have stood up, and declarer would have had to play clubs from his hand at the end. This kind of high trump sacrifice shows up in the literature quite often, maybe a bit more often than in actual play. The idea is that you get one trick back immediately by stopping a ruff, and a second trick when your remaining trump comes into play. Here the seven wasn't high, but it prevented declarer from making a trick with the king of clubs.



A LITTLE BIT HIGHER

Playing in the Rosenblum Teams in Montreal, 2002, I pick up

♠ J 7 4 ♥ Q 10 7 3 ♦ K 4 ♣ J 9 8 6

Our side is silent. South, on my left, opens **two clubs**, strong and artificial, and his partner responds **two diamonds**, neutral. South continues with **two hearts**, which is alerted, and North bids **two spades**. South now bids **two notrump**, and North raises to **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

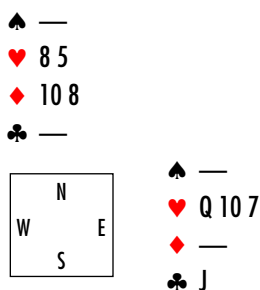
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	2♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

Upon inquiry, we are informed that two hearts was Kokish, showing either hearts or a balanced hand too good for two notrump. Two spades was waiting, and two notrump showed the balanced hand. Partner leads the spade ten, and down comes the dummy.

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

Declarer wins the top three spades, and leads the three of clubs to the two, queen, and six. While this is going on I am trying to work out what declarer has. It seems to me that he has the thirteenth spade, because from 10952 I would expect partner to lead low. For some reason declarer isn't going after diamonds; perhaps he hopes to make nine tricks without letting me in. Declarer now plays the five of clubs from dummy.

If you want to gain the lead, you must play cards that can win the trick, which means high cards and trumps. The jack would be an admirable attempt in that direction, but rather risky. I settle for the nine, just a little bit higher than the eight. Although the nine and eight are equals at double dummy, they are unequal in what they reveal to declarer. He wins the ace and king of clubs, partner pitching a diamond. Then declarer cashes the thirteenth spade, partner and dummy throwing diamonds, while I throw a heart. Now declarer plays ace of diamonds and another diamond, partner following. After a moment's thought, he goes up with dummy's queen. I am in with the king, in the following position:



We need the rest of the tricks, so I will have to credit partner with the ace of hearts. Declarer had four spades, five clubs and at least two diamonds. That leaves at most two hearts, so there is no need to lead an honor. Should I cash my jack of clubs? I see no advantage to it, since partner is down to hearts and the jack of diamonds. I play a heart, and partner takes declarer's king with the ace. We take the rest of the tricks, for one down. The full deal is:

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

The critical moment came on the second round of clubs. The jack would have been spectacularly successful, but the nine is good enough if declarer can't see all the cards. The danger in playing the eight is shown by what actually happened at the table. Declarer, Brad Moss, kept East out by ducking, which could only be wrong if he had all the remaining clubs. That secured nine tricks, and as a bonus, West was endplayed. Declarer guessed correctly¹ on the diamond exit, scoring an overtrick.

Something else strikes me about East's choice of spot cards in the club suit. Modern partnerships have taken signaling to great lengths, far beyond the simple messages that could be sent in earlier times in the game's history. Partners who signal a great deal should check that they have the same understanding about when a card is likely to be a signal. I once faced the following suit combination as West:

1. When this deal occurred, West actually held the king of diamonds and East the jack. I had them exchange places in this story, in order to properly reward the play of the nine of clubs.

♠ 8 4

♠ A J 10 6 3



North had opened one spade. East passed and later doubled South's one notrump. I chose to lead my own suit against one notrump doubled, and at some point South gained the lead and led the seven of spades. I covered with the eight, to promote my partner's five if declarer's seven was singleton. But what my partner thought was that I was asking for a return of the higher-ranking suit.

ALL IN A ROW

In a local team-of-four match, I hold as East, no one vulnerable, the following:

♠ K J 10 5 4 ♥ A 9 7 3 2 ♦ 6 4 ♣ 6

In some partnerships, I open this kind of hand with one spade, but not in this one. I pass, and South opens **one notrump**. We pass through-out. North bids **two clubs**, Stayman, and South bids **two hearts**. North now signs off in **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♥
pass	3NT	all pass	

Partner leads the club queen, and a rather meager dummy arrives:

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

Declarer wins in hand and plays the heart five to the four and ten. I see no reason to win this trick. I have no club to return, no shift I am eager to make, and winning immediately can only help declarer's entry situation. So I play low, and declarer leads dummy's other heart. Now that dummy is exhausted of hearts, I could win the ace without helping declarer's entries, but there are two reasons to duck again. First, if

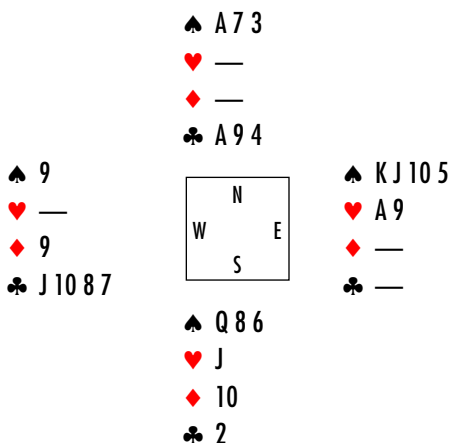
declarer has ♥KQJx and plays a third round, I can establish my long card, whereas if I win the second round I can never score my fifth heart. Second, I don't really want to drop partner's king. So I play low again, declarer winning the king. He then continues with the queen, on which partner discards a club, and dummy a spade. This is what I was hoping for: I can now establish my long heart either by winning the ace and returning one, or by ducking again. Enjoying myself, I decide to play low a third time. Declarer hastily switches to diamonds, playing low to the queen and low back to the king, both winning. Partner takes the third diamond with his ace and plays the jack of clubs. As declarer considers this, I reconstruct his hand. He is marked with the queen of spades and jack of diamonds for his 15 high card points. He has four hearts, and it looks like he has four diamonds. In clubs, I suspect that partner has six, given his willingness to play them again in spite of dummy's threatening nine. In that case, if declarer tries a duck of his own, he will go down.

Declarer eventually does play low on the jack of clubs. Partner switches smartly to his singleton spade, and when declarer unhappily plays low, I win the king of spades and two hearts, for one down. The full deal was:

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

There was nothing terribly profound about this deal, but to have five straight defensive ducks was unusual. The first two were automatic, the third a bit lame, as it might have exposed me to a throw-in. The two by my partner, Hans Mattson, were essential. What do you think of declarer's play?

Declarer made a mess of things starting with Trick 1, when he could have ensured nine tricks by winning the ace of clubs in dummy, preserving the king as an entry to the red tricks. I wager many would do the same: it seems natural to keep the ace-nine-other over West. His other major misplay came when partner played the jack of clubs. This was the position:



There is a strong clue that the king of spades is on the right; had I no semblance of an entry, I would have undoubtedly won the third heart. Declarer's best play here, surely, is to take the jack of clubs with the ace. When I show out, he can play ace and another spade, ensuring the contract. I can win the king of spades and take two hearts, but then I have to give declarer the last trick with the queen of spades. If, instead, I follow to the second club, declarer still plays ace and another spade, playing the queen if I play low. If, after all, West has the king of spades, he will almost certainly be 2-2-4-5. Then, upon winning the king of spades and cashing the ten of clubs, he will have to concede the game-going trick either to dummy's nine of clubs, or to declarer's ten of diamonds.

WHO HAS THE NINE?

Playing IMPs online, I pick up

♠ A 10 ♥ 9 6 5 2 ♦ A 10 9 6 ♣ K 9 4

East, on my right, is the dealer at unfavorable vulnerability. He opens **three spades**, which I pass, as does West. My partner reopens with **double**, and after East's pass, I have to consider what to do. If I could count on West's having at most two spades, I would try 3NT, but with the possibility of three spades on my left, I choose **four hearts**. West **doubles**, which comes back to me. Running to four notrump is certainly a possibility, but since West may be prepared for a runout, I decide to play right here. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		3♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	4♥
dbl	all pass		

West leads the nine of spades, and I await the dummy with trepidation.

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

East plays the jack, and I have to consider whether to win the first trick.

We have plenty of high-card strength, suggesting that the double was based on five trumps. In that case, I might lose three trump tricks, so it may be better to win and hope to throw the spade loser on the fourth club. Another reason to win the first trick is that I may wish to exit with the spade at a time when East will be endplayed into giving me a ruff-sluff or breaking diamonds. I win the first trick and play the heart five. West plays the eight, and I put on the jack from dummy. East, as expected, shows out, throwing the seven of spades. I now cash three rounds of clubs, all following, and throw the losing spade on the thirteenth. West ruffs in and plays the trump king. The position, with dummy to play, is:

	♠ 8
	♥ A 7 3
	♦ K 8 2
	♣ —
♥ K	
	♠ —
	♥ 9 6 2
	♦ A 10 9 6
	♣ —

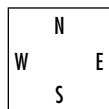
West has shown up with five hearts and three clubs. His likely number of spades is two, which leaves three diamonds. If that is the case, I need to strip West of his other spade and throw him in with a trump, endplaying him in diamonds. Should I duck the heart king? No, because when West plays another high heart, I won't have a trump to exit with after ruffing a spade. I win the ace of hearts immediately, and trump dummy's spade, West following with the four. Now I exit in trumps. West takes the queen and ten, East throwing his remaining spades. In this all-diamond ending, West now leads the queen.

I notice that East, apart from his first discard of the spade seven, has played the lowest of equals in spades at every opportunity. I ask West about their partnership's signaling habits, as evidenced by the play in the spade suit. "Yes, certainly," he replies. "The jack was natural. Our second card in a long suit is normal remainder count, and when signaling an even number we play the highest non-honor that we can afford. Subsequent plays are suit preference." What suits are discriminated by

the spade plays, I ask. “Diamonds and clubs,” he replies. But East has no clubs, I point out. “That’s correct.” I ask him what it means to show extra strength in a suit that one is known to be out of. “Well, it generally means that he does not have the relevant extra strength in the suit that he does have remaining cards in.” Diamonds, I say, attempting to clarify. “Diamonds,” he agrees. I ask what is meant by relevant extra strength. “Relevant to my defense,” he replies. And all spade plays after the second indicate suit preference in this manner, I prompt him. “Yes,” he says. “It is very inefficient, I know; we have a lot of work to do yet on our methods.”

It seems to me that the “relevant extra strength” is not the jack, since West either is looking at it or has to play his partner to have it. It can’t be the ten, either, since West can assume declarer has it or the defense is immaterial. No, the “relevant extra strength” must be the nine of diamonds. If East had it, together with the queen or jack, then a low diamond from West would break the contract. When East has no nine, then West should lead an honor, whether he has one or two. By furiously signaling for clubs, East has given me the information that he does not have the nine of diamonds, which I knew, anyway. But I also know that West knows it, so I suppose I should finesse East for the jack of diamonds. The one indication to the contrary is that the jack of diamonds might have been the difference between doubling four hearts and passing. That seems the weaker of the two arguments, though, so I win the king and finesse East for the jack of diamonds. This works, the full deal being:

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



I expect the reader has figured out by now that much of the story was fictional. The deal is real, and was played by Pierre-Yves Guillaumin, who played every card right but didn't have to contend with the queen of diamonds exit. The deal was reported on Fred Gitelman's *Bridge Base Online* as 'Deal of the Week' #373. I was aided in my thinking by some excellent defensive signaling material prepared by Eric Kokish.

Perhaps we are more familiar with the case where the nine is visible in dummy. That makes it right for West, or East for that matter, to lead the honor from jack or queen third. Here, if East-West did not have such fine signaling rapport, West might well feel compelled to lead low from honor third, in case his partner has the nine. If the declarer is sympathetic to that, he might play West for both honors when he leads one. East can try to scare declarer off that course by letting go one diamond and keeping a spade, the potential winner of a three hundred point second undertrick.

VERY CLOSE

In a rubber game of high standard, I hold as dealer, vulnerable against not:

♠ 9 6 5 4 3 ♥ Q 6 5 4 ♦ A Q ♣ A K

I open **one spade**, of course, and after a pass from my left-hand opponent, my partner jumps to **three hearts**. After a pass on my right, I have a bit of a problem. My hand feels a tad heavy for a simple raise, but the honors are in the short suits, so I content myself with **four hearts**. Partner startles me by leaping to **five spades**. He must have very good hearts and spades, and be worried about the minors. He really should have at least four trumps for this, so I can afford to play in spades and protect the diamond tenace. I bid **six spades**, and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
pass	5♠	pass	6♠
all pass			

West leads the queen of clubs, and I await the dummy wondering whether partner's thoughts are in line with my own.

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

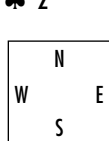
Hm. Rather well bid by us, I think. Barring horrible splits, I will be able to throw the queen of diamonds on the long heart, and make six or seven. I win the club in hand and lead a spade. West follows and suddenly I realize I haven't really given this hand any thought. I hope I shouldn't have led something else to Trick 2, but it's too late for that. Is there any reason to finesse here?

I expect to make this slam unless West has no hearts, which gives me a heart loser. If I knew that to be the case, how would I play trumps? Playing the jack would work nicely if West had queen third, of which there are three occurrences. It would lose to the three queen doubletons offside, as well as queen singleton. If I planned to finesse the jack, it would be better to cash one high trump first, but there is no safe way to hand.

Assuming that West has no hearts, the three onside queen thirds are a bit more likely than the three offside queen doubletons, but I don't think that quite makes up for the extra case of singleton queen. That would be hard to work out at the table, and I doubt my opponents would like to see me try. I rise with the ace, and East throws a small diamond.

That's good, in one way: I can pick up the trumps for no losers. But how do I get to hand? If I play a heart to the queen and West ruffs, I will be down. Since I am only in six, it must be better to finesse in diamonds. If that wins, I'll have the entries I need, and if it loses I can still hope that West has a heart. The queen of diamonds stands up, and I take a spade finesse. I return to the diamond ace for a second trump finesse and draw trumps. I then test the hearts, and note to my smug satisfaction that West did in fact have no hearts, and this slam had in fact been in jeopardy. The full deal is:

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



This deal is from the wonderful book *Test Your Play as Declarer*, vol. 2 by Paul Lukacs and Jeff Rubens. The authors suggest another attractive line, leading a heart at Trick 2. A ruff from either side does not hurt, and if West pitches and later proves to have all four trumps, you can take the diamond finesse. An obscure losing case for this, which might be all there is between this line and that in the text, is that if West has a doubleton small diamond (in addition to four spades and no hearts) he can pitch a diamond on the heart at Trick 2, making his trumps impregnable.

Another question to ponder is, if you play a heart up at Trick 2 and get a showout, and then cash the ace of trumps to which all follow, what should you do next? Here, real life considerations affect the calculation. West is much more likely to ruff in from two small than from three to the queen.

Here is the mathematics that I suggest would be too hard to do at the table. When West follows to the trump at Trick 2, we are in danger only when he has no hearts, so let us assume that to be the case. For West (also for East) there is one four-card spade holding, four three-card spade holdings, six doubletons, four singletons, and one void. As the text suggested, finessing the jack wins against three queen thirds, but loses to three queen doubletons and singleton queen. We will have to ignore the minor implications from the bidding and opening lead. Given the assumed heart division, West is more likely than East to have spade length. To calculate how much more likely, we have to examine how many ways there are to distribute all the minor-suit cards. If West

has three spades and no hearts, the number of minor suit holdings is the number of ways of choosing ten items from twenty-six, i.e.

$$\frac{26!}{(26-10)!10!} \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{26 \times 25 \times 24 \times 23 \times 22 \times 21 \times 20 \times 19 \times 18 \times 17}{10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1}$$

Similarly, if West has two spades and no hearts, the number of ways of distributing the minor suit cards is the number of ways of choosing eleven items from twenty-six, which is

$$\frac{26!}{(26-11)!11!} \quad \text{or} \quad \frac{26 \times 25 \times 24 \times 23 \times 22 \times 21 \times 20 \times 19 \times 18 \times 17 \times 16}{11 \times 10 \times 9 \times 8 \times 7 \times 6 \times 5 \times 4 \times 3 \times 2 \times 1}$$

If we compare these two numbers, and there is a whole lot of convenient cancellation, we can see that each doubleton spade is only 11/16 as likely as each tripleton spade. So we can compare the two lines of play by awarding 11 points for each winning case that has a doubleton spade, and 16 for each that has a tripleton. Finessing the jack scores 16 for each queen third, for 48. Going up ace scores 11 for each doubleton small, and 16 for the three small, for 49. Wow, that was close.

COMPOUND ENDING

Playing in an international team event, I hold as South, with only the opponents vulnerable:

♠ 6 3 2 ♥ K 7 ♦ A J 2 ♣ A Q 10 9 2

After two passes, it is my turn. The five-card suit with strong intermediates surely puts this in the 15-17 range, and I open **one notrump**. With the opponents silent, partner checks for a major-suit fit with **two clubs**. I bid **two diamonds** and partner signs off in **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	pass	1NT
pass	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3NT	all pass	

The opening lead is the five of spades. Dummy is about what one would expect:

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

The opponents lead “second and fourth”: they would lead low from four, middle from three. Having very few top losers, I feel it is best to

play low from dummy. East wins the nine and returns the six of clubs. I insert the ten, which loses to the jack. West follows with the eight of spades.

With no particular reason to think otherwise, I am going to assume that the carding has been honest. That means East has one more spade, the king, jack, or ten. If I could afford a second spade loser, I could ensure a second spade trick for myself by playing low, and finessing the queen on the third round if necessary. However, I have lost two tricks already, and with the ace of hearts, king of diamonds and king of clubs still outstanding, I don't want to surrender another cheap trick at this point. East's honor is more likely to be the jack or ten than specifically the king, even ignoring the fact that West might have led an honor from J1085, so I finesse the queen.

Disaster! East wins the king. Things brighten immediately, however, as East returns the king of clubs. I win the ace, West following. My next move is to advance the king of hearts. West takes the ace, thinks things over for a while, and then plays a club. After I throw a heart from dummy, East surprises the rest of us by showing out, pitching a diamond. I win, and contemplate the following position:

♠	A 7
♥	Q 10
♦	Q 9 5
♣	—
♠	6
♥	7
♦	A J 2
♣	Q 2

I need the rest of the tricks. I am assuming West has both remaining spades. Who has the king of diamonds? With doubletons in both black suits, East has nine red cards to his partner's five, making him an early favorite. What's more, consider that unusual shift, low from king and one club. Surely a diamond from low cards would appeal more. In any event, if I play East for the king of diamonds, I am just one trick short of my contract, with menaces galore, so that's what I am going to do. I

think I can manage it if I don't misread the position badly. I cash the queen of clubs, throwing a diamond from dummy while East discards a heart. I now play my last club winner: West throws the deuce of hearts, I unblock the queen of diamonds from dummy, and East throws a second heart. The position is now:

♠	A 7
♥	Q 10
♦	9
♣	—
♠	6
♥	7
♦	A J 2
♣	—

There are only two hearts left out, and assuming I am right about the spades and diamonds, I can now assure my contract by playing a heart to the queen. If that leaves West with the jack, two rounds of diamonds will squeeze him in the majors. West in fact shows out on the heart, discarding a diamond. I now cash the ace of spades, and East has to come down to two diamonds to keep the jack of hearts. I now finesse the jack of diamonds, cash the ace, and the deuce is good for Trick 13.

Let's analyze this five-card ending further, still under our assumptions about spades and diamonds. The following factors contribute to putting declarer in a very strong position:

1. There are menaces in three suits.
2. There is a well-placed menace in spades, behind West.
3. Each menace is accompanied by at least one winner.
4. Declarer has been able to cash all the clubs.

The combination of the first three factors means that declarer will be in a position to take the rest of the tricks whether he crosses to dummy with a heart or a spade. At worst he has to read the position, and play the right suit next. The fact that all the clubs have been cashed means that West has already had to make a discard, and East three discards,

before South has to decide on the order to cash his winners. West not only can't guard both red suits, he is two cards away from being able to do so. If he guards hearts, he has only one diamond, and if he guards diamonds, he has no hearts.

We saw above how the declarer cannot go wrong if the defense fails to keep at least three hearts, so let's assume that they do. It is now reasonable for declarer to lead either a heart or a spade. If the position does not become clear, declarer then must choose which suit to play next. We can make a chart of the possibilities, putting West's remaining heart holdings along the top, declarer's first play and intended second play (barring new information) down the left. A check mark means that declarer's plan works against West's holding.

Declarer plays	West is left with		
	♥ —	♥ x	♥ Jx
♥, ♠	✓	✓	x
♥, ♦	✓	x	✓
♥, ♥	✓	✓	x
♥, ♦	x	✓	✓

If declarer leads a heart to the queen first, collecting low cards, he then has to decide who has the jack of hearts. Leading a spade first looks better — declarer will go down only if he misreads West's heart length by two, either playing him for no hearts when in fact he has jack and one, or vice versa.

A good declarer is extremely likely to read this position correctly in practice. If he credits the defense with being extremely unrevealing with their discards, he can take the following probabilistic line. Play under the assumption that West no longer guards the suit that he discarded on the fifth club. So, if West discarded a diamond, declarer plays him to not guard diamonds: a spade to the ace followed by diamonds. This will fail only if West was dealt a singleton ace of hearts. If West has discarded a heart on the fifth club, then declarer plays him not to guard hearts, by cashing the major suits. The order is unlikely to matter unless East has erred by pitching a heart from xx or two from xxx; now if declarer plays a heart first he can switch to diamonds after seeing East show out.

Following this overall plan, declarer will succeed even against perfect discarding unless West started with a singleton ace of hearts, or

ace-jack fourth or fifth. In effect, declarer has played this ending as though it were a compound squeeze, where West would first be triple squeezed on the run of the clubs, and whatever suit he saved would become the pivot suit of a double squeeze. This position is somewhat simpler: dummy's ten of hearts means that only one opponent can truly guard hearts, and West's eight black cards mean that he can't hold both red suits to begin with. The full deal was:

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

Vince Demuy played this deal for Canada in a match against Denmark in the 2003 World Youth Championship. The early play went as described. When West won the ace of hearts, he could have defeated three notrump by playing a spade or a diamond. If he plays a diamond, it should be a low one, not the seven, in case declarer's diamond spot is the six instead of the deuce. However, he played a third club. Declarer won in hand, crossed to the queen of hearts and led the queen of diamonds, covered by the king and ace. He then cashed the jack of diamonds before finishing the clubs. That would have been successful if the ten of diamonds had fallen, or if West had had either the jack of hearts or the ten of diamonds and declarer knew or guessed which. However, it was not to be.



MAKE-BELIEVE

South deals the first hand of a rubber featuring strong players. I am East and hold

♠ J 8 5 4 2 ♥ 8 2 ♦ 5 4 3 ♣ Q J 6

South opens the bidding with **one diamond**. My partner jumps to **three hearts**. North raises to **four diamonds**. I have nothing to say, and South continues to game with **five diamonds**. Everyone is content, the bidding having been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
3♥	4♦	pass	5♦
all pass			

Partner leads the two of trumps, and dummy comes down:

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

North might have made a negative double had they been in use at this club; as it was, I think he made a good call. With my decidedly meager assets, we will be doing well to defeat five diamonds. I know my partner's style: three hearts will be a good suit, likely seven cards long. What should I make of this lead? It seems strange to lead a trump. Presumably he has nothing appealing, so no black singleton, and

non-solid hearts. To give us a chance, I will place partner with the ace and queen of hearts. If I can get in to play a heart through, that will be three tricks for us. On the other hand, if declarer is given time, perhaps he can get the clubs going for heart discards.

Declarer wins the opening lead with the nine in dummy and leads a low spade. The reflex action is to play low, of course, but declarer's play is a little suspicious. Why is he not going after clubs? Perhaps he is looking to duck this trick to partner.

The only way to get the lead is to play cards that might win a trick. I fly in with the jack of spades, only too aware how foolish I may look later. Declarer wins the king, partner playing the six. He follows with the ten of spades, on which partner plays the nine. Declarer thinks about that for just a moment, then wins the ace and continues with dummy's last spade, the seven. The queen is the only spade out, but I cover carefully with the eight. Declarer ruffs, and expresses surprise at the appearance of my partner's queen. He follows with a low club to the nine and ace, and another club, ducking my jack. A heart through gives us our two tricks, and we have beaten the contract one, the full deal being:

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

Declarer played well, I think. He placed the ace of hearts on his left, and intended to insert the ten of spades at Trick 2 had I played low. Then the clubs could have been ruffed good, with trumps for entry. For the defense, it was an exercise in make-believe. I had to make believe I had the queen-jack of spades, which would defeat declarer's plan. Partner

had to believe it, too, producing a wonderfully impassive nine of spades under declarer's ten: I really should congratulate him. Thirteen tricks were available for declarer at that point, but surely he cannot be criticized. At the end, he was hoping to find West with the doubleton queen of clubs, and he carefully avoided giving partner a chance to throw it away on a second round of trumps.

The deal comes from Victor Mollo's highly entertaining *Winning Bridge*, with the seven and eight of spades judiciously switched to give the defense a fair chance.

COMPLICATED

In the first deal of a rubber played at the St. Clair Bridge Club in Toronto, I hold

♠ K Q 7 5 2 ♥ K 6 ♦ J 7 4 ♣ Q 9 3

My partner opens **two clubs**, the only forcing bid. I have plenty for a positive of **two spades**, and partner bids **three spades**. What to do now? Surely we are very close to slam. In this game, partner will expect the ace from me if I cuebid four hearts. Not at all sure what to do, I bid a quantitative **five spades**. I am hoping he will take that as good trumps, good values, and no ace to cuebid. Whatever partner makes of it, he goes on to **six spades**, ending a rather rough sequence:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	2♣	pass	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	5♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

The opening lead is the heart three, and partner puts down a fine hand.

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

I think this is a good contract, but it is very complicated. Primarily I will try to establish dummy's long club, but the jack of diamonds adds some extra chances, and I can eliminate hearts before surrendering the lead. Several lines come to mind:

- a) I can play off the ace and king of diamonds. If the queen falls, I'm home. Otherwise, I will need the king of clubs to be right and some other luck. I will exit with a diamond: if West wins, he's endplayed. If East wins, he will have to break clubs, and I'll try to guess whether he has led from the eight or the ten (I'll need him to have one or the other). If I get that wrong, I'll have to guess whether to drop West's king or pin East's spot.
- b) I can lead a low club from dummy. If East takes the king, we're home. If he plays low, I can insert the nine, hoping that it wins or forces the king. If it loses to the ten, then for starters I'll need the king onside. I can then either play to pin the eight, or, probably better, lead a low club to the jack, making if West has two or three clubs, or long clubs and the queen of diamonds (I'll cash the top diamonds and run trumps, squeezing him).
- c) I can lead a low club and play the queen if East plays low. If the queen loses to the king, I can cash a high club in case the ten falls. If it doesn't, I can then cash the top diamonds and run the trumps, making if the clubs split or someone has both minor suit guards.

Plan a) must be inferior — it is somewhere around 50%, and plan b) starts at 50% with significant other chances. I haven't made up my mind between b) and c) yet, though.

This has taken a little while and the opponents are fidgeting. I still have to decide how to win the first trick and draw trumps. Since I have decided to lead clubs from dummy, I win the first heart with the queen. It may not matter, but on general principles I want to keep as many trump entries to both hands as possible. I start with the ace, unblocking the five from hand as East follows. I then play the nine to the king. When trumps are 2-2, I am left with two entries in each hand.

I cross to the ace of hearts, cash the ace of diamonds and lead the low club from dummy. East, despite all the time I have taken, isn't ready. He eventually plays low. The queen must be better than the nine, now. The queen holds, and I play back the three. West follows low again, so

the missing clubs are the eight, ten and king. I play low now, partly in case the king was doubleton to begin with, and also because I don't want East to be able to return a club, taking out the entry. He wins the eight, and leads the three of diamonds. The position is now:

♠ J 4	
♥ —	
♦ K 2	
♣ A J	
	♦ 3
♠ Q 7 2	
♥ —	
♦ J 7	
♣ 9	

There is no need to play the jack, since if East has the queen then he will be squeezed, or clubs will split. Just in case the queen is now bare on my left (unlikely, making West 2-7-2-2) I run the diamond to the king. I now play three rounds of trumps and East is squeezed, the full deal being:

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

It's instructive to note how much help the defense can give by not being ready. Here, though, in an odd way, it might have worked in

their favor. If East had played low in tempo, I might have put in the nine. That suggests that being out of tempo with king-ten fourth could be used as a coffee-housing ploy, although I don't suspect my opponent of that here.

Against great defenders, one might have to worry about a duck of the queen by *West*, for example with K8xx. Then if I play small on the second round and lose to East's ten, I'm likely to hold myself to two club tricks.

SMOKE IT OUT

Playing rubber bridge for money, I am first to speak, with only the opponents vulnerable. I hold:

♠ A 3 2 ♥ J 8 4 ♦ A K 10 5 3 ♣ 9 5

I open **one diamond**. After the next hand passes, my partner jumps to **three clubs**. I have nothing to do but repeat my suit — **three diamonds**. Partner raises to **four diamonds**. I have minimal values, and minimal diamond length, but with the top trumps and good controls surely I am worth a cuebid of **four spades**. This leads partner to bid **five hearts**. I have my bids, but I certainly don't want to encourage a grand slam. I sign off in **six diamonds**, and everyone passes. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	3♣	pass	3♦
pass	4♦	pass	4♠
pass	5♥	pass	6♦
all pass			

The king of hearts is led, and partner puts down for me:

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

A good contract, and not everybody would bid it. People don't often jump with a second suit, assuming they play strong jump shifts, and here the trump support was modest. The modern approach, bidding clubs, spades and diamonds, might have been successful too.

I'd better get to playing. It looks like twelve tricks: four trumps, five clubs, two aces, and a heart ruff. The thing is to avoid losing a heart and a trump, and to make sure of the ruff in dummy. If trumps are 3-2, I can simply play off the ace and king, and then run clubs, throwing spades. That would be bad if trumps are 4-1, though. What I would like is for them to take the queen of diamonds early, leaving me free to take my ruff, draw trumps, and run the clubs. Suppose I play a diamond to the ten. If it loses, West might exit with a club. Then I can come to the ace of spades, ruff a heart, and play the jack of trumps — but I'll have to overtake, playing for trumps to split. I need another entry to hand.

It looks better to lead the jack of diamonds on the first round. Now if West wins, I have an extra entry to hand. If he plays a club, for example, I can win, cross on a trump, ruff a heart, come to the ace of spades, draw trumps and run the clubs. If he ducks from Qxxx, I'm not so well off, but I don't see anything better.

I lead the jack of diamonds from the table, and East plays the queen. That's good — maybe I can make seven! Suppose he has queen fourth, though. If I win, ruff a heart, and play two more rounds of trumps, I'm in bad shape. With three losers to dispose of, I'll need him to have no fewer than four clubs.

It must be best to let East hold the queen of trumps. If West ruffs the club return I can always give up the game. But all is well, as the full deal is:

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

This deal is actually from Victor Mollo's *Winning Bridge*, with the winning line suggested by the Senior Kibitzer. I later found a very similar deal in a column by B. J. Becker. The deal is not difficult, but it is good to be prepared for this situation, as it may help the defense to be smooth. An enterprising West might duck the diamond jack at Trick 2 from queen third. Then if declarer takes a second finesse, West can win and return a trump, leaving him a trick short. Declarer, holding two clubs, has no need to do that; he can afford to go up on the second round, and if necessary enter dummy in clubs to pick up the trumps. West's best try, with queen third of diamonds, is to win the first round and lead a club, hoping declarer has only one.

PRECONCEIVED NOTION

Playing rubber bridge, I am South, in last chair, with

♠ A K 4 3 2 ♥ A K ♦ 8 6 ♣ A 10 3 2

Only the opponents are vulnerable. West passes, and partner opens **one club**. East passes, and I jump to **two spades**. Our style is to jump shift on three kinds of strong hand: relatively balanced, one-suited, strong support for opener's suit. I don't know how that style originated; I read about it in Bobby Goldman's *Aces Scientific* years ago. The opponents remain silent. Partner raises to **three spades**, and I show the nature of my jump by bidding **four clubs**. Partner cuebids **four diamonds**, and I reply in kind with **four hearts**. Now partner signs off, in tempo, with **four spades**. That makes a grand slam rather unlikely. I could make a further try with **five hearts**, but I would hate to have partner sign off slowly when I always intended to go to six. I bid **six spades**, and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣	pass	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	4♠	pass	6♠
all pass			

West leads the queen of hearts, and this is what I survey:

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

I see that I was overly hasty. Six clubs, with the diamond tenace safely tucked away in the closed hand, is a much better contract: I can ruff a heart for the twelfth trick, and throw the queen of diamonds on the fifth spade. I wonder if I need trumps 3-2 for that: the spades may be blocked with my tiny spot cards ...

I suppose I ought to be thinking about six spades. At least I have escaped a diamond lead. What to do here? There is no problem if the queen of spades falls. If it doesn't, there is still the diamond finesse. What can I do if someone has all four outstanding trumps? If West has them, I can simply draw them and my fate will lie with the diamond finesse. It's a little less obvious, but I can actually pick up four trumps in the East hand, too, on the strength of dummy's mighty six-spot. I must not start with the ace or king, though. I can lead low from hand, or run a spot from dummy. The problem with that is that it risks losing a trump trick unnecessarily, and then if the diamond finesse loses I will be down. So what I could do is take the diamond finesse first, and when that wins, run the six of trumps.

That's all very clever, but East is more likely to have third queen of trumps and the king of diamonds than four trumps and no king of diamonds. It must be better to preserve the elimination chances. I win the opening lead and cash the ace of spades, to which all follow. On the king of spades, West discards a heart. I play off the other top heart and cross on a club. It is safe to ruff dummy's heart at this point, because if East trumps I can discard a diamond. In fact he follows to the third heart, and I ruff and continue cashing out clubs. East glances up and our eyes meet. He concedes, knowing I am about to throw him in with the queen of trumps. The full deal was:

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

You may have found this one too easy. A very fine writer, though, saw this deal as an example of the other line, and recommended finessing diamonds at Trick 2. I think that was a mistake on his part, and mistakes by great players can be instructive. Here, my guess is that he had a preconceived notion of the right line of play, and constructed the deal to illustrate the technique of testing one suit before playing another. At the table, one is more likely to worry about a losing finesse than a 4-0 trump split.

There is a certain kind of opponent against whom a diamond finesse at Trick 2 might be the right play. East had a chance to double North's cuebid of four diamonds, and some players take all such opportunities, doubling with even only a slight preference for a lead of the cuebid suit. For my taste, that is too active. The big upside for doubling, obviously, is that it may direct a lead that defeats the slam. However, there are numerous downsides. The double creates bidding space, and if the opponents are well prepared they will have meanings for pass and redouble, and redouble in the passout chair. The double may cause them to focus on the effects of the potential opening lead, and they may as a result select a better strain or a better level. Lastly, declarer may benefit in the play of the cards. He can be fooled, of course, as well: there have been celebrated deals where declarer was misled by a psychic double. But if he is aware, as he is entitled, of the defender's tendencies in doubling cuebids, then declarer is in a stronger position than if the defense had been silent.

MORE AVOIDANCE STRUGGLE

I am first to speak in a new rubber, and I hold

♠ A K 5 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ 10 9 8 ♣ Q 8 7 6

Being in England, I open **one notrump**, weak. The next hand passes, and partner raises to **three notrump**, which concludes a brief sequence:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

West leads the seven of hearts, and I see we have mirror distributions:

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

Barring an unlikely lead from specifically seven-six doubleton, it seems likely that West has four or more hearts. With just six tricks outside, I will need three from clubs, so I will need a 3-2 split, probably with the king onside. In addition to that, I need to avoid losing a club and four hearts, so clearly I must let East hold the first trick. If he switches to a spade, I must win, or else risk the loss of three hearts, a spade and a club when the defense reverts smartly to hearts. More likely, East will play another heart at Trick 2, and I will once again need to decide whether or

not to win. Against resourceful opposition, there is a danger in playing low again: West may play a third heart, and East could discard the king of clubs from king and one, leaving me helpless. The 'one' has to be smaller than the jack, and if East unblocks the king from king-ten doubleton, West has to go in with the jack when declarer leads low from hand — sort of a crocodile-and-a-half.

Having sorted through all these possibilities, I play low from dummy to the first trick and let East's queen hold. He returns the ten, which I take with the ace, as West follows with the nine. Still mindful of the possibility of a clever unblock, I cross to dummy in diamonds and start the clubs with a low one from the table. East plays the ten, I the queen, and West the five. I intend to continue clubs, but I foresee a difficult decision up ahead. The outstanding clubs, apart from the king which I have placed on my right, are the nine and jack. There will be no problem if West plays the nine when I lead a second club from hand: I can play low, assured that East will have to win. If West plays the jack on the second round, though, I will have a choice of plays. If East's king is now bare, I need to play low, allowing him to win, but if East started with king third, I need to play ace and another. Looking for clues, I cross back to dummy on a diamond. My thought was that if West were to show out on the second diamond, I would play him for three clubs. He is more likely to have been dealt nine major suit cards than ten; also, with 5-5 in the majors he might have bid something or led a spade. However, all follow to the second diamond. When I cross to hand with a spade and lead another club, West, as I feared, does play the jack.

So did West start with doubleton jack, or jack-nine third? His presumed five hearts (if he has only four there is no danger) leave less room for clubs, suggesting the doubleton is more likely. If he has jack-nine third, well, both defenders will have made good plays and they will defeat me. I go up with the ace of clubs, felling the king. When I play another club, my worst fears are realized, and I am one down, the full deal being:

There are six third kings for East: KJ10, KJ9, KJ5, K109, K105, K95. East has no hope with KJ10: since West will play the lowest outstanding club on the second round, declarer ducks without concern. With KJ9, East must play the jack on the first round, which leaves declarer a guess when West shows up with the ten. With KJ5, once again there is no hope. If East plays small, declarer will play low on the second round; if East plays the jack, declarer can safely play the ace on the second round, knowing that the remaining clubs are the five and king. When East holds K109, declarer faces a guess when West's jack comes up on the second round. This is a guess declarer should get wrong! It is a restricted choice situation. Declarer should reason that, whether he sees the ten or the nine, East with a choice might equally have played the other one.

West, on the other hand, had no choice. Perhaps a better way to look at it is that declarer should take the strategy that wins against both K10 and K9, losing only to K109. Finally, we have K105 and K95. Declarer should get these ones right, putting the ace on West's jack. In return for getting these two winning cases, declarer gives up on K5.

The only case that is really close is the one where East plays the jack on the first round, and West plays the five and ten. Now East can have either KJ or KJ9, and in either case has made a good play. Perhaps declarer should play East for the longer holding, since he holds (by assumption) two hearts to his partner's five. Also, with 1095, West might have (erroneously) held on to the ten. Acknowledging that this last case is somewhat of a guess, the recommended play for declarer wins on seven out of ten cases: KJ10, KJ9, KJ5, K105, K95, K10, K9.

I found this fascinating deal in Victor Mollo's *Winning Bridge*.

BLATANTLY

In a rubber bridge game with pretty good players, I am West and pick up

♠ 10 7 3 ♥ A 10 2 ♦ 5 4 ♣ K Q 10 8 6

With both sides vulnerable, South is the dealer and opens **one diamond**. I pass, and North responds **one spade**. Partner passes also, and South jumps to **three diamonds**. After another pass by me, North thinks a bit and then leaps to **six diamonds**. Everyone passes, the bidding having been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♠	pass	3♦
pass	6♦	all pass	

It is me to lead. I am going to start a high club — is there any reason to lead a deceptive queen? I can't see one. In fact, if there is a heart guess I may be better off having shown good clubs. I lead the king of clubs, and North tables his hand:

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

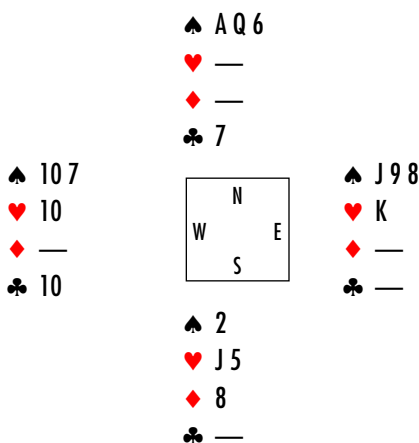
	N	
W		E
	S	

Perhaps that was an untutored leap to slam by North, but I don't disapprove. With a good fit and plenty of controls, he may have decided that six diamonds was a fair shot, especially with no further aid to the

opening leader. Declarer wins the ace, partner playing the four, and leads the three of hearts to the six and queen, and I have to decide what to do.

I can take my ace or not, and if I win, I can try to cash the queen of clubs or do something else. Partner played the four of clubs on the first trick, and the missing ones are the two and three. I would expect a count card from partner in this situation, and the second-highest card is the one he would usually play. It rather looks like declarer has no more clubs, or perhaps nowhere to put them. With solid trumps, good hearts and the king of spades, she might have drawn trump and taken a club discard before playing hearts.

A common reason to withhold an ace is to give declarer a guess with a holding such as KQ10. That doesn't apply here, since I have the ten. The obvious course is to win the ace and try to cash the queen of clubs: what might happen then? That will be fine if it wins, but if declarer is out of clubs, I see a danger. She may hold seven good diamonds, king and one spade, and the jack of hearts, having blatantly played a heart down missing both the ace and the king. If that is the case, she will ruff the queen of clubs and play all the trumps, coming down to this four-card ending:



Now the play of the last trump squeezes East in the majors.

The simplest defense to this is to play a heart back, and that appears right to me. Which one should it be? Since partner may have to guard spades, I had better not put him in the position of having to guard

hearts as well. If I lead the ten, partner might be squeezed if declarer should happen to hold something like:

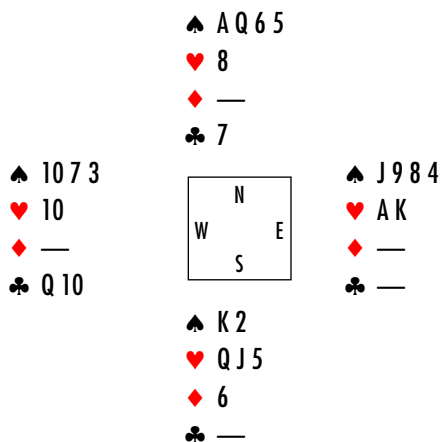
♠ 2 ♥ K Q 9 ♦ A K J 10 9 8 7 6 ♣ 9

But if I play a low heart to partner's jack, then he can guard the spades while I look after hearts and clubs. There can be no squeeze on me, since there is no entry, and so long as I watch the spots and partner isn't diabolical, we will be fine. So, after all this, I win the ace of hearts and lead one back to partner's king, for one down, the full deal being:

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

"Sorry for not going in with the king of hearts," says partner graciously. I nod, agreeing, while thinking that he would have been sorrier yet if I had been missing the ten of hearts, and had ducked. Declarer played well. Drawing trumps before the heart play might allow the defenders more information, and perhaps more time to think. East might throw an encouraging heart, or the lowest club, suggesting four to begin with.

Against better defenders, and I'm not sure we qualify, it might be better to take the legitimate line, playing East for ace-king of hearts and spade length. Win the opening lead, and run all the trumps but one, coming to this ending:



On the last trump, a club is let go from dummy and East is squeezed without the count. The only hope for the defense is that declarer may misread the position. West could try discarding a spade, so that when East throws a heart honor there is a chance, from declarer's point of view, that dummy's fourth spade is good. But if she sticks to her guns, playing for the legitimate chance of spade length and the heart ace-king on her right, she can't go wrong.

A better shot is for East to paint a picture of having started with five spades, along with the ace and king of hearts. Run-of-the-mill Easts discard first any spades beyond four, then all their clubs and small hearts, and finally a heart honor on the last trump. So unless declarer is very shrewd and has great respect for you, the best defense is probably to pitch the fourth spade first, then all the clubs but one, and then hearts, finishing with an honor. Then declarer is likely to believe that you still have spades guarded, and when she plays a heart, you can cash a club (or two). At the highest level, perhaps declarer simply decides that East is more likely to have been dealt four spades than five.

There is a point about the bidding that is of interest, at least to me. North-South made no cuebids, and with two unbid suits, West has little to go on. Almost all partnerships use the Lightner double of a freely bid slam, either to suggest an unlikely lead, or specifically dummy's first-bid suit. Maybe a better use of the double is to suggest a lead of the second-most likely suit. That has to be defined, of course, and it could be quite complicated. Any of the opponents' bids may be natural or artificial, and may show length, or control, or something else. Here, where

there were two completely unbid suits, perhaps we could define the likeliest suit to be led as the lower-ranking one, on the theory that the higher-ranking one is more likely to be bid by the defense.¹ On this auction, then, a club lead would be defined as likeliest, and a double would call for a heart lead.

These slam hands with eleven tricks and an open suit are difficult, and it is good to have considered them away from the table. It gets more complicated if the spades have a tenace, say if North's are AQ10x. That opens up the possibility of a finesse, or the jack coming down short, and also gets us into winkle territory. This deal was described in Dorothy Hayden's *Winning Declarer Play*.

1. Good opening leaders often make that sort of inference. Suppose the bidding goes one heart on your left, two notrump on your right, three notrump on your left. If you are looking for partner's suit, spades is the least likely, because he could have bid them at the one-level.

NO WAY TO KNOW

In a rubber game of moderate stakes, both vulnerable, I hold the following as dealer:

♠ J 9 6 4 2 ♥ A 7 ♦ A K 5 ♣ A K 10

I open **one spade**. After a pass from the next hand, my partner jumps to **three spades**. That is forcing in this game, so after the next hand passes, I have to consider our slam prospects. They seem good, unless partner has disappointing trumps. I try to express this by bidding **five spades**. Partner carries on to **six spades**, concluding a sequence which is, if not scientific, at least unrevealing.

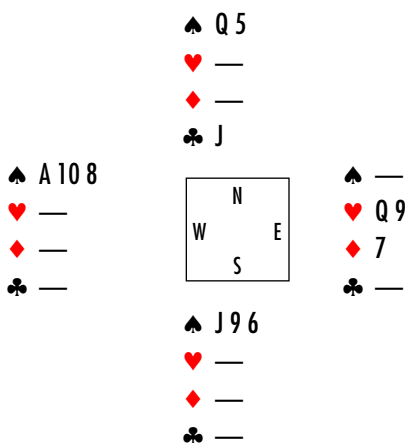
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	3♠	pass	5♠
pass	6♠	all pass	

West leads the ten of diamonds, and partner tables a suitable dummy:

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

Mentally congratulating us, I put on dummy's jack, and take the queen with the ace. A spade to the king is greeted with a small diamond from East. That's a blow — time to reassess our chances.

Clearly, if I play trumps again, I am one down. I have to aim for a three-card ending where West can be endplayed. Suppose, for example, that he is 4-3-3-3. Then I can cash three rounds of clubs, take a heart ruff in hand, and then a diamond ruff in the dummy. The position, with dummy to lead to Trick 11, will be:



I can then ruff the club with the jack in hand, leaving West with no good option: he can overruff and be endplayed, or he can underuff and allow me to lead toward the queen of spades.

For this ending to work, I need to strip the rest of West's nine side cards, without ever giving him a chance to ruff in. Along the way, I need to ruff something in hand to get to West's length. I've seen this sort of situation many times, of course. The thing is, there are often slight differences, and each case deserves study. If I am to strip West's hand, he must have at most three hearts, at most three diamonds, and therefore at least three clubs. If he has three clubs, the play is quite straightforward: I ruff a red card in each hand and simply arrange to finish in the dummy.

Ironically, things are more complicated in the advantageous case where West has *four* clubs. Now I should be able to handle a doubleton in either red suit, so long as I guess correctly which it is. If West is 4-2-3-4, for example, I can simply cash three clubs and ace-king of hearts, ruff the fourth club, and ruff the diamond in dummy. That brings us to the three-card endgame, and a ruff of the third heart with the jack produces the desired result.

The above line will fail, though, if West is 4-3-2-4, for he can insert the eight of spades on the third diamond. There is no line of play that works against both 4-3-2-4 and 4-2-3-4, since West must not be allowed to play a trump before Trick 11. Which pattern is more likely? East's discard on the trump was a diamond. With two five-card suits he might pitch from either one, but with a six-card suit and a five-card suit, presumably he is more likely to pitch from the longer. That means West, if he has four clubs, is more likely to be 4-3-2-4. Against that pattern, I can play three rounds of hearts ruffing in hand, cash the other top diamond, and then play four rounds of clubs. But what if clubs were 3-3 all along? I will be in the wrong hand to ruff a diamond.

The cure to that quandary would seem to be to test the clubs first. If they are 3-3, I will know how to play. What do I do, though, if I have decided to play West for three hearts and East shows out on the third round of clubs? If I ruff the third heart, there is no way to finish in dummy without playing a third diamond, which will be fatal. The only remedy is to ruff the fourth club, cash the other diamond, and play to win three hearts via a finesse.

This is maddening! It seems that if I choose to play West to have at least as many hearts as diamonds, I have to either guess the club division, or wind up taking a heart finesse when clubs are 4-2. After all this, I decide to play off three rounds of clubs and, wouldn't you know it, East shows out on the third. Now I have to decide whether my feeling that West has three hearts justifies taking a heart finesse. I don't think so — after all, a pitch from five diamonds must look pretty safe, and maybe East is just trying to put me off. After a quick check of my calculations, I ruff the fourth club, cash the ace and king of hearts, come to the king of diamonds, and lead a third diamond. To my great relief, West follows. I trump the diamond in dummy, ruff dummy's heart with my jack in hand, and West surrenders. Here is the full deal:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

It was a good effort by East to fool me, and it almost worked.

The deal came from a collection of newspaper columns, *Becker on Bridge*. I often scour old columns looking for misanalyzed hands, and I must say those of B. J. Becker are never of much use in this regard.¹

1. My perspicacious editor queried the use of the word "never". Perhaps I should follow the example of the captain of the *Pinafore*, and say "hardly ever". The fact remains, however, that none have been of any such use to me.

A GOOD EFFORT

Playing rubber bridge in a good crowd, I am first to speak, neither vulnerable, with

♠ A K ♥ A Q J 10 4 ♦ Q 8 5 3 ♣ 7 5

I open **one heart**. West overcalls **two clubs**, partner raises me to **two hearts**, and East passes. Some scientific bidders might make a trial bid of three diamonds, but that is not for me. I bid **four hearts**, aware that it is a bit of a push. All pass, making the bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
2♣	2♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

West leads the club king and I look over our assets:

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

Partner has given me two vital cards, yet I will need some luck — a reflection on the optimism of my bid, I suppose. East overtakes the king with the ace and returns the deuce. West wins the nine and plays a third club, the queen. East discards a spade, and I need to decide what to ruff

with. I don't think it will make a difference, but it looks like I can afford to ruff with the ten, keeping the nine of hearts a dummy entry.

The hand revolves around the diamonds, obviously. West is a heavy favorite to hold the king. That being the case, I don't see how I am to make my contract if they divide evenly. If West has four, I guess I'll need East to have jack-ten doubleton. But clearly my best hope, assuming West has the king, is that it is at most once guarded.

Suppose I draw all the trumps and play a diamond from hand. If West plays low, I can put on the nine. Then if the king is bare, it will fall under dummy's ace on the second round, and a finesse of the eight will see me home. If West's first diamond is the ten or jack, I can still play the nine from dummy, and take a third-round finesse the same way.

I see a potential problem with this. West is strong and just might work out to play the king of diamonds on the first round. That will pose me a problem. I can win the ace and lead a low one from dummy, but if East follows smoothly low, I won't know whether to play the queen, hoping to drop an honor, or insert the eight, hoping to win the trick. It would be a good defense, but these opponents are capable of it.

I see a remedy. I play a heart to the nine and another back to the jack, all following. Now I take the slight risk of playing off the ace and king of spades, which drops the queen from West. Leaving the third trump out, I now lead my low diamond, intending to play the nine if West plays any card other than the king. He does play the king, however, whether perforce or with sinister intent I cannot tell. I call for the nine from dummy, leaving West on play. He continues with another diamond, the six. This is the position, with dummy to play:

	♠ 9 8
	♥ K
	♦ A 2
	♣ —
♦ 6	
	♠ —
	♥ A Q
	♦ Q 8 5
	♣ —

West has made a good effort, but it won't bear fruit here. I take West's diamond with dummy's ace and ruff a spade with the ace. Now I cross with the queen of hearts to dummy's king. This catches East with no good pitch from the jack of spades and jack-ten of diamonds. Aware that he is counted out, he surrenders graciously, and I make my contract. Here is the full deal:

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

West's play of the king of diamonds is striking, a kind of counter-intrafinesse, with the feel of an uppercut in a side suit.¹ More prosaically, it is yet another instance of the advantage gained by playing the card one is known to hold. This is another deal from *Becker on Bridge*.

1. Gabriel Chagas, in an article for the Bridge World, coined the term "intrafinesse" for a first-round finesse of a middle card, like the nine of diamonds here, followed by dropping an honor and winning a third-round finesse.

RESTRICTED?

Playing in a Swiss Teams against unknown, earnest competition, I am last to speak, with only the opponents vulnerable. I hold

♠ A 3 ♥ K J 9 2 ♦ A Q 10 3 ♣ K Q 5.

Partner opens in second chair with **one club**, which would seem to leave little for the opponents. They in fact remain silent throughout. I start with **one heart**. Apart from not having a five-card suit, hands of this strength are seldom best treated by a jump shift. I have too much power to simply make a slam suggestion and leave the rest to partner. He raises me to **two hearts**, and I consider what we might make. On the optimistic side, ace sixth of clubs and four hearts to the ace and queen makes a good grand slam. Against that, it is barely possible that we are off two aces, and if we are missing the queen of hearts we might belong in clubs or notrump. Fortunately, we have some machinery, and I bid **two spades**. This is artificial, asking for a description. Partner bids **three hearts**, which suggests a minimum with four hearts. I now bid **four notrump**, Roman Keycard Blackwood, and partner bids **five spades**, showing two aces and the queen of trumps. He won't likely have the king of diamonds with that, which would still leave us looking for a thirteenth trick anyway, so I settle for **six hearts**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♣	pass	1♥
pass	2♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♥	pass	4NT
pass	5♠	pass	6♥
all pass			

West leads the four of spades, which may be a good start for them:

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

I try the queen from dummy, but East produces the king and I win the ace. All follow as I play a low heart to the queen, and I take a moment for my next play. A successful diamond finesse would see me home; failing that, I will need four club tricks, either from a 3-3 split, or a successful finesse of the nine on the third round. It is potentially a restricted choice situation, after cashing the king and queen and dropping an honor on the right. Going up ace will win on the four possible jack-ten thirds; finessing the nine wins on the eight possible honor-lows.

I have to consider how to combine these chances. Suppose I draw trumps and cash the king and queen of clubs, dropping an honor. Now the best play in clubs, a finesse of the nine, risks going down with the king of diamonds onside. So the natural play will be to go up ace, with the diamond finesse in reserve. If that play fails, I won't be in for much criticism.

Another idea is to play the jack of diamonds early. If I could be sure that East would cover whenever holding the king, that would be quite appealing. If he played low, I could go up ace and try for four club tricks, and concede a diamond afterwards. This would require a 3-2 trump break, so if I want to try it, I should test trumps with a second round first.

The danger is that East may be clever enough not to cover the jack of diamonds. My play may look a bit suspicious. I suppose I might play that way with a holding like AQ8x. Unfortunately, I have taken a good bit of time with this, and the defense may have been tipped off that I am trying to figure out what chance to play for. I think it's too late for this idea now.

I cash the king of trumps, to which all follow, and cross to the ace, West discarding a spade. I decide to play off the king and queen of clubs, and East drops the jack on the second round. I have to give this a little more thought. What are the straight percentages? If I lead a club and West plays low, a finesse is approximately a two-to-one shot. Going up ace is just one chance in three, but a successful diamond finesse would give me half of the remainder, for a total chance of two out of three. The two lines are approximately the same. Can I give myself a small extra edge by playing off the ace of diamonds, in case the king falls, before finessing the nine of clubs? No, better not do that. If East has dropped a club honor from J10xx, with the guarded king of diamonds, I'll have egg on my face.

What about inferences from the opening lead? Some authors recommend attacking leads against suit slams, and the current West looks like a book-reader. The opening lead was a low spade, probably from the jack or ten. If West had had the king of diamonds, would he have preferred an attack there? Our auction left spades and diamonds unbid, so if West is a player likely to attack from a king, there is a probabilistic reason to play him not to have one. Since I have nothing else to go on, I lead a club to the ace, getting a showout. Fortunately, the diamond finesse succeeds, and I remember to run the nine first, so I wind up with an overtrick. The full deal was:

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

The corollary to my conclusion about the opening lead is that if West had looked like a player unlikely to attack from a king, the best play

would be to take the club finesse. The fact that he led a spade, without the king, makes it more likely that he has the king of diamonds. If you can form an opinion one way or the other, you improve on the two-to-one odds available when a club honor falls in two rounds, making the whole line more appealing. The alternative of leading the jack of diamonds after finding trumps 3-2, intending to go up ace if East plays low in tempo, is surely reasonable and maybe best. At least, I hope I wouldn't criticize a teammate who went down playing that way!

Thanks to Eric Kokish and Beverly Kraft for this deal from the 2004 *Daily Bridge Calendar*.

A WOLFF'S DREAM

In a very pleasant dream, I deal for myself

♠ A K J 10 3 ♥ A K 7 2 ♦ K 5 ♣ 6 2

A very good hand indeed, and playing for money, too. Violins are playing a peaceful strain — Beethoven's *Pastorale Symphony*, perhaps? I open **one spade**, and partner raises me to **two spades**. Wonderful! In this game, we even count my hundred honors. I bid **four spades**, and everyone passes. The simple bidding, suitable for a dream, has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♠	pass	1♠
all pass			4♠

West leads the queen of clubs, and the first dark clouds appear on the horizon. Couldn't West have led, say, the ace of diamonds? This is my dream, after all. Here comes the dummy:

South deals, Both vul.

Land of Nod

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

It's starting to look like I may need the hundred honors just to break even, for there are two clubs to lose, at least one diamond, and a heart.

Perhaps the clubs can be set up. I fly into the air and circle behind West's chair. He's led from ♣QJ9. Excellent. I note also the diamond layout, where West has the ace and East the queen.

I return to my chair and play the king of clubs from dummy. The music has turned ominous, thumping percussion and insistent brass. East hasn't played yet; what is going on? The drumming gets louder, and suddenly East throws down the three of clubs. What is this? Now I have only one club loser, but what can I do? I play ace, king and a third heart, but I'm just going through the motions. West shows out on the third heart and East wins, to play a trump. I ruff the fourth heart on the table and try the jack of diamonds, but East covers and down I go. I expect the music to stop now, but it keeps getting louder, and louder, insisting that I replay this deal in my mind. I go back, trick by trick, back to the play from dummy at Trick 1...

My thanks to Bobby Wolff for this deal from the *2004 Daily Bridge Calendar*. The full deal was:

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



LOCK OVERLOOKED

Playing IMPs at the world level, in a partnership with very sound over-call standards, I hold

♠ K Q 4 3 2 ♥ A ♦ 8 6 3 ♣ J 7 4 3

Nobody is vulnerable, and South opens **one heart** on my right. We pass hands of this strength, and the bidding continues **one notrump** on my left, and **three hearts** on my right. North raises to **four hearts** and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	1NT	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

I lead the spade king, and the dummy comes down with:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

Partner plays the nine (high encourages) and declarer follows with the jack. Before playing to the second trick, I need to consider how the cards lie. It would seem that partner has three or four spades to the ace, and wants me to continue spades. Perhaps he has four hearts and four spades, in which case we may have an effective tap. If declarer ruffs and

plays trumps, a third round of spades will bring declarer to partner's length, and if partner has an entry, a fourth spade will set the contract.

If declarer has seven hearts, the tap will not be effective, but I have no reason to override partner's signal. Is there anything else to consider? I have been assuming that partner has the ace of spades, but is that necessarily so? We lead the king from both ace-king and king-queen. With a doubleton nine, partner would play high, on the theory that either I will hold the jack, or declarer with ace-jack opposite the ten will win the ace. It would be different without the ten in dummy. Would declarer ever duck from ace-jack third? What if he is afraid of a third-round spade ruff? Missing the ace of trumps, he could certainly foresee the danger. Perhaps he is hoping to avoid the ruff, and later discard his third spade on a winner in dummy. If he has ace-queen doubleton of diamonds, I can't stop him. But what if he has no clubs? Then he can win my spade continuation in the dummy, discard the ace of spades on the ace of clubs, and play trumps.

But that's if I play a *low* spade. Instead, I play the queen. If declarer has played a tricky jack from ace-jack third, that will lock him in hand. Partner follows with the five, and declarer does in fact turn up with the ace. He leads a diamond to the jack. Partner wins the ace and returns a trump to my ace. A spade ruff now sets the contract one trick, the full deal being:

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

This deal, from the 1997 Transnational Teams, was reported by Alan Truscott. Andrew McNair of Great Britain found the play of the jack at Trick 1, and succeeded when West continued with a low spade.



TOO EDUCATED

In a local Swiss teams against unknown opposition, I hold

♠ — ♥ A Q 2 ♦ K 9 6 ♣ K Q 10 6 5 3 2

Only we are vulnerable, and East on my right opens **one spade**. This is a good hand, but still a simple overcall for us: **two clubs**. West raises his partner to **two spades**, and partner comes in with **two notrump**. I could simply raise to three notrump, but with seven clubs and a void I should investigate further. Three clubs would be a signoff; to show a strong one-suiter, I cuebid **three spades**. Partner bids **four diamonds**. That must be the ace, since I hold the king, so I cooperate with **four hearts**. Partner now bids **four spades**. That doesn't improve my hand any, but I decide to go on to **six clubs**. Everyone passes, the bidding having been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	2♣
2♠	2NT	pass	3♠
pass	4♦	pass	4♥
pass	4♠	pass	6♣
all pass			

West leads the queen of spades, and partner apologizes for his four spade bid as he tables the dummy:

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

I agree with partner about four spades: the assessment of it, that is, not the bid itself. The situation does not seem to call for a cuebid of a king, in front of the opening bidder's suit. However, we seem to have some play. If either opponent has the sole diamond protection, he can be squeezed. If it is East, I can play low on the queen of spades, preserving the king as a menace. I can then knock out the ace of trumps and proceed to squeeze him in spades and diamonds. If it is West with the diamond guard, on the other hand, I can cover the queen of spades with the king at Trick 1, and later use the ten of spades as the menace.

Actually, if I don't commit myself at Trick 1, I can execute a squeeze even if both defenders guard diamonds. The spade layout is just what is needed for a rare coup, the two-suit double trump squeeze. I project the play in my mind as follows. Ruff the spade, knock out the ace of trumps. Win the return in hand. Run all the trumps but one, and then finish the hearts ending on the table. The position will be:

♠ K 10
♥ —
♦ A
♣ —
♠ —
♥ —
♦ 9 6
♣ 3

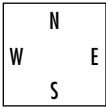
Now if East has bared his ace of spades, ruff it out. If West has bared his jack of spades, pin it. And if they both have two spades, cash the ace of diamonds and the South hand is high.

I hurry to put this plan into action. Unfortunately, West shows out on the king of clubs, discarding a heart, while East holds off. Time to think again. The position is now:

♠ K 10 6
 ♥ K 10 3
 ♦ A 10 7
 ♣ 8 7

 ♠ —
 ♥ A Q 2
 ♦ K 9 6
 ♣ Q 10 6 5 3

Now I need an extra entry to dummy, to play the trumps. So I try to sneak through a heart to the ten, hoping West won't be shrewd enough to insert the jack. He is not tested, for he does not hold the jack. East wins it, and exits with a heart. I win the king and play a trump. East rises with the ace and exits with his third trump. I lose a diamond at the end, for two down. Not a triumph, for the full deal was:

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

This didn't happen to me, but it might have; it's one of the perils of being too educated. The real life declarer covered the queen of spades at Trick 1, and went on to successfully squeeze West in spades and diamonds. The deal was reported by Ranald Davidson in *The Kibitzer*. I am always on the look out for interesting deals. Please direct any correspondence to roy.hughes@sympatico.ca.

FEARFUL SYMMETRY

At a critical point in an international match, I pick up a big hand:

♠ 9 8 ♥ A K Q 9 7 ♦ A K Q 6 5 ♣ Q

Both sides are vulnerable, and the dealer on my right passes. This is a forcing opening, surely, and our methods call for **two clubs**. The opponents remain silent, and partner responds with a positive **three clubs**. I bid **three hearts**, and partner rebids his suit with **four clubs**. I have another suit to show, so I bid **four diamonds**, and now partner bids **four spades**. That's a strong bid. I think we may have all the tricks, but I need to check on aces, so I bid **four notrump**. Partner replies **five hearts**, showing two. It looks like if the clubs are solid we have thirteen top tricks, so it must be right to play in notrump, where we can test each suit in turn. I bid **seven notrump**, and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	2♣
pass	3♣	pass	3♥
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	7NT
all pass			

West gives his opening lead some thought, and then produces the seven of spades:

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

This is a very good contract, but it would have been better from the other side, as this spade lead prevents me from unblocking the queen of clubs prior to running the suit. However, if clubs are no worse than 4-2, there will be thirteen tricks. What if they are 5-1? Then one of my five-card suits may split 3-3; that would also be thirteen tricks. Does the order I test the suits matter? Yes, I see it does. If I try clubs first, I won't know what to discard from hand, and if the clubs prove to be 5-1, I will have to guess which red suit is 3-3. So I should test a red suit first. Does it matter which one?

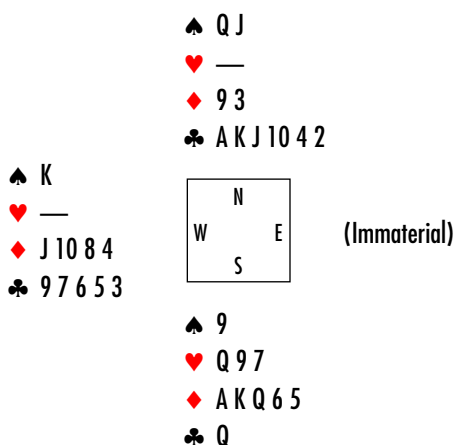
It doesn't matter if any one of the three suits divides congenially. There is one other slim chance, though. I have eleven top tricks, and if either opponent guards three suits, he can be squeezed for a trick or two. An amusing case would be if East held

♠ — ♥ J 10 4 2 ♦ J 10 4 2 ♣ 8 7 6 5 3

I intend to play the ace of spades, of course, and with this hand East would be squeezed for two tricks at Trick 1. A more realistic possibility is that one defender holds the guarded king of spades, five clubs, and four or more in a red suit. Now cashing the other red suit will squeeze him, and because I have extended menaces in all suits, the squeeze will gain two tricks. Suppose for example West has a hand like:

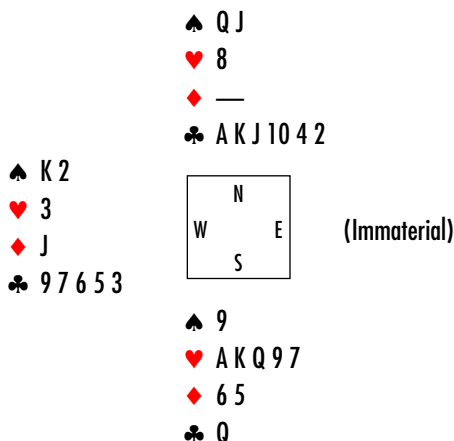
♠ K 7 2 ♥ 3 ♦ J 10 8 4 ♣ 9 7 6 5 3

Then if I win the ace of spades and play three rounds of hearts, West will be squeezed in this position:



Any discard on the third round of hearts immediately surrenders two tricks. The same squeeze will work against East, since I can afford to throw a diamond from dummy.

Now suppose West has the same hand, but I choose to cash the diamonds first. West follows all the way, and East shows out on the third round. Now, to exert any pressure on West, I have to cash the hearts, in this position:



All follow to the first heart. On the second, West can afford a spade, and dummy is squeezed, forced to let go one of the extended menaces. Of course, in practice I will pitch a spade, because I am hoping that the

clubs are good. Now on the third heart, West can pitch the king of spades. That gives me a trick, but only one trick, my twelfth. West will score his nine of clubs at Trick 13.

So if either defender guards spades, clubs, and diamonds, he can be squeezed for two tricks by cashing hearts, and if either defender guards spades, clubs, and hearts, he can be squeezed by cashing diamonds, and if we pick the wrong suit to cash, we go down. Is there any clue? These red suits are fearfully symmetric. I review our opponents' methods. You may think that the opponents had nothing to bid on, but people bid a lot nowadays. Some pairs play bids like two hearts showing both majors, 0-10 points. If West had the hand above, for example, that would give East:

♠ 10 6 5 4 3 ♥ J 10 5 4 2 ♦ 7 2 ♣ 8

If that would be a two heart opening for them, it would be reason to go the other way, cashing diamonds. Unfortunately, there is nothing in our opponents' methods to go on, and it looks like a complete guess. I decide to cash diamonds, so I win the ace of spades, and lead a diamond: seven, ace, two.

I was planning to continue the diamonds, but before I do I should consider whether to cash one heart first. What would it mean if someone showed out? I am playing to squeeze someone who began with two or more spades to the king, four or more hearts, and five or more clubs. Could such a hand have six hearts? No, because it has shown in to a diamond, and that would be fourteen cards. So if I cash a heart and get a showout, there is no triple squeeze with clubs, spades and hearts, but the other variety is still possible, and I should therefore continue cashing hearts. Is there any downside to cashing a heart? If everyone follows, I plan to go back to diamonds. Suppose West follows to the third round. I will then need to find a discard from dummy. A little reflection shows that that is not a problem — I can throw a spade. If East is triple-squeezed and throws the king of spades, the squeeze will repeat when I cross on a club and cash the good spade.

So I cash a heart, and everyone shows in. They show in on the king and queen of diamonds as well, so I have expended a lot of brainpower to no result. We make seven notrump, the full deal being:

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

Fred Gitelman confronted this problem in the 4th International Olympic Committee Grand Prix, held in Salt Lake City in 2002. The deal is an interesting study in triple squeeze technique. One possibility was not considered in the text. What if East has the king of spades and length in both red suits? Although it is not a feasible line of play, can he be squeezed by winning the ace of spades and cashing four rounds of clubs? The answer is yes, but only for one trick. The South hand, with its two extended menaces, just has too many cards. South has to surrender a red card on the third high club, and then on the fourth East can release the same suit, and then win the last trick.

At the other table, the contract was seven clubs, from the same side and with the same low spade lead. How do you play?

It looks right to go up and play clubs from the top, which requires only a 4-2 or better break. The alternative of cashing the trump queen and then negotiating a third-round red-suit ruff requires 4-2 or better there (barring a hand with two singletons) and some further good fortune.

Canada, on their way to a gold medal finish, won 20 IMPs when Fred Gitelman in seven notrump correctly tested the red suits before clubs, and Nick Gartaganis found the spade lead against seven clubs.



BLUFF AND DOUBLE BLUFF

Playing in a regional knockout against tough competition, I am the dealer with both sides vulnerable and hold

♠ Q 8 6 4 3 ♥ A K J ♦ 7 4 ♣ A K Q

I open **one spade**, and after a pass on my left, partner raises to **two spades**. My right-hand opponent has nothing to say, and I conclude a simple auction with **four spades**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West puts down the jack of diamonds, and partner tables a fair dummy:

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

East takes the diamond jack lead with the ace and returns the three of clubs. I win the king, cross to dummy in diamonds, and lead the deuce of spades. East plays the jack, and it's my turn.

If the spades are 2-2, my play here will not matter, and at first glance it would appear I should cover the jack, in case it is singleton. That

would also be right if East had managed to play the jack holding the ace and king as well. I have a concern, though, that this enterprising and learned opposition may be capable of playing the jack from ace-jack-nine, or king-jack-nine.

How might this look from East's perspective? Holding AJ9 or KJ9, he may reason as follows. "If I play the nine, declarer will play low, hoping for a singleton ace or king, and paying off only to singleton jack. But if I play the jack, declarer surely will cover, since the jack may be single, and he won't suspect me of playing the jack holding the nine." If that's what he thinks, he's wrong: I'm plenty battered and bruised enough to worry about opponents who play tricky jacks. It certainly could be right to play low.

Are there any clues? The opponents' silence is not particularly telling; they haven't much strength, and a good part of it is in our suit. The lead is suggestive of long diamonds, although there isn't much in it. Long diamonds would increase the odds of short spades. I suppose also that with six or seven diamonds and the ace-king of spades, West might have bid two diamonds. Is there any clue from the opening lead? Again, I think the evidence is slender, but with AK9 of trumps and long diamonds, West might have been drawn either to a short suit lead, or to leading a top trump. That would leave open the possibility of playing three rounds of trumps, or finding the right switch at Trick 2.

One shouldn't admit it, of course, but I don't want to fall victim to a tricky play and have the story make the rounds. I am going to give East credit for making a good play, and try to make a better one. I play low, and am extremely relieved to see West play the king. There are no further problems, and I lose just two trumps and the ace of diamonds, making four spades. The full deal was:

	♠ 10 7 5 2 ♥ Q 7 5 4 ♦ K Q ♣ 8 5 2										
♠ K ♥ 9 6 2 ♦ J 10 9 6 5 2 ♣ 10 7 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A J 9 ♥ 10 8 3 ♦ A 8 3 ♣ J 9 6 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q 8 6 4 3 ♥ A K J ♦ 7 4 ♣ A K Q										

There are situations in bridge, and this is one of them, that are a game of bluff and double bluff, where each side tries to outwit the other for an extra trick. I am about to present some abstract analysis of this situation, and it is worth noting beforehand that such analysis is almost always quite different from the at-the-table battle. Theoretical discussions of this sort usually begin with the disclaimer “other things being equal”, *ceteris paribus*. Victor Mollo noted somewhere that *ceteris* are seldom *paribus*. Here, for example, we can note that the best play by East with AKJ, assuming that the only issue is the trump suit itself, is the jack. This is the only card to give declarer a problem. In practice, defenders seldom do this. They worry that playing low will solve all problems of control, and after all it is only when partner’s singleton is the nine that declarer is given a problem. Similarly, a risk in playing the jack from AJ9 is that declarer has both the king and queen, and that the play of the jack solves his entry problems. Another danger for the defense is that declarer may not have a secure entry to dummy, to lead the second round of the suit. For example, in the deal above, East might be concerned that declarer’s hand is

♠ Q 8 6 4 3 ♥ A K ♦ 7 4 ♣ A K Q 4

Now it is safe to play the nine from AJ9, because even if declarer plays low, he can’t get to dummy to lead towards the queen. Playing the jack gives declarer a free shot at making his contract. Of course, declarer

might have led the first round of trumps from hand with this, saving his entry for the second round. And East might have returned a diamond, or ducked the opening lead, to make the entry premature.

So, having noted that such discussions are of marginal bridge utility, let us explore some mathematics. Assume that both South and East are competent, learned players, and are both aware that the only issue for South is avoiding three trump losers, and that there is no clue from the bidding or early card play that makes the various holdings not equally probable, and that there is clearly another entry to the table. Under these assumptions, when declarer leads a low trump from dummy, we are concerned only with 3-1 splits, of which there are eight. Further, if East has a singleton ace, king, or nine, nothing is at stake. We are solely concerned with the five holdings AJ9, KJ9, AKJ, AK9, J. With three of these, East has no choice to make. With a singleton jack, he has absolutely no choice. If he has AKJ or AK9, he theoretically has no choice: he must play low to give South a problem. With the remaining two holdings, AJ9 or KJ9, he has the genuine choice of playing the jack or the nine. Now East is a thoughtful player, and has considered beforehand what he might do with each of the five holdings. A plan which deals with all contingencies we call a *strategy*. One strategy is to play the jack from AJ9 or KJ9, and low otherwise. We can call that strategy “East-jack”. Another strategy is to always play low, which we can call “East-low”.

Now let’s look at South’s problem. With the five holdings we are considering, East will always play the jack or nine. In either case, South might reasonably play the queen or low. Any strategy for South must specify which card he will play against either play from East. Two possible plays from East, each with two possible plays from South, gives rise to four strategies:

South-queen:	play the queen regardless
South-low:	play low regardless
South-queen-on-jack:	play queen on jack, otherwise low
South-queen-on-nine:	play queen on nine, otherwise low

A strategy that calls for playing the same card whenever a given situation arises is called *pure*. The strategies we have looked at so far are all pure. The alternative of playing unpredictably, sometimes one way,

sometimes another, is called a *mixed* strategy. For example, East could plan to play the jack from AJ9/KJ9 roughly half the time, mentally tossing a coin whenever facing that decision.

We can make a table of how well the various pure strategies work. Each of the four rows in the table corresponds to one of South's pure strategies, with the name at the left. The two columns correspond to East's strategies, with the name at the top. At the intersection of each row and column, we list the winning cases for South corresponding to the use of this pair of strategies.

	East-jack	East-low
South-queen	9,J,AKJ	9,J,AKJ
South-low	AJ9,KJ9	AJ9,KJ9
South-queen-on-jack	J,AKJ	J,AKJ,AJ9,KJ9
South-queen-on-nine	9,AJ9,KJ9	9

For example, suppose declarer believes in the first strategy, South-queen, i.e. he always plays the queen if East plays the nine or jack, and suppose also that East believes in the East-jack strategy, always playing the jack when he has it. South will win against singleton nine, singleton jack, or ace-king-jack, so those holdings are listed at the intersection of row one and column one.

Can we tell from this table how to play? It is not obvious. Suppose, sitting South, we know East to be a believer in East-low. We can counter by playing South-queen-on-jack, and we will win four out of five times, the best result in the table. On the other hand, if East knows that South will play South-queen-on-jack, perhaps he should shift to East-jack. That would limit South to two winning cases. But if South knows East is going to play East-jack, perhaps he should shift to South-queen-on-nine, bumping the winning case count up to three. But if East knows ...

To solve this conundrum, we need the support of some results in *game theory*, an esoteric branch of mathematics developed, amongst others, by John von Neumann (1903-1957). Von Neumann was a giant of twentieth-century mathematics, whose work had profound implications for quantum mechanics, economics, computer science and military planning. I am going to show how the techniques of game theory can deal with the little problem of how to handle our trump suit. First,

we convert our table into a *payoff matrix* by replacing, in each cell of our table, the list of winning cases by a count of how many there are:

	East-jack	East-low
South-queen	3	3
South-low	2	2
South-queen-on-jack	2	4
South-queen-on-nine	3	1

The next step is to try to simplify this matrix. We do this by examining pairs of strategies for any one player, looking for cases where one of the strategies is clearly inferior. If one strategy is sometimes worse and never better than a second strategy, we say it is *dominated* by that second strategy. South-low, for example, returns 2 regardless of East's strategy, while South-queen returns 3. South-low is clearly inferior, or dominated, and can safely be removed from the table: it can never be a sensible strategy. Now compare South-queen-on-nine to South-queen. When East employs East-jack, both strategies have a payoff of 3. But against East-low, South-queen-on-nine returns only 1. So South-queen-on-nine, while sometimes as good as South-low, is sometimes worse and never better: we can discard it as well. Our payoff matrix is getting simpler; it now looks like this:

	East-jack	East-low
South-queen	3	3
South-queen-on-jack	2	4

We can't get any further by considering South's strategies. He can either play it safe for a payoff of 3 by playing South-queen, or he can roll the dice with South-queen-on-jack, getting a return of either 2 or 4, depending on East. But let's look now from East's perspective. East-jack is equal to East-low against South-queen. But against South-queen-on-jack, East does better with East-jack (remember, East wants lower pay-offs). So the East-low strategy is never better and sometimes worse, and can be discarded.

That leaves only two strategies for South and one for East, and brings us to the final simplification. With the demise of East-low, there is no justification for South to use South-queen-on-jack. We can discard it, arriving at:

	East-jack
South-queen	3

We have arrived at a matrix with only one strategy for each player.¹ This means that there is a single mathematically correct strategy for each player. The mathematically correct play by both sides is for East to put in the jack when he has it, and for South to play the queen whenever East plays the nine or jack. At least, that is the correct play under our long list of assumptions, most importantly the one about learned opposition. Practically, South-queen-on-jack is probably best against moderate opposition. East-jack is fine against anyone.

1. I am indebted to my friend and proofreader, Peter Winkler, who reminded me that the payoff matrix can be simplified by successively removing dominated strategies. Not all payoff matrices can be reduced to single-strategy forms in this way; the reader who wants to get into the realm of mixed strategies and saddle points should consult a game theory text such as *The Compleat Strategyst* by J. D. Williams.



COULDN'T FOOL HIM

Playing in an international team event, I pick up

♠ A 10 5 2 ♥ J 10 ♦ A ♣ A K J 7 6 4

I am the dealer with only the opponents vulnerable. I open **one club**, and the next hand overcalls **one heart**. Partner joins in with **double**, which is negative and suggests four spades. After a pass by my right-hand opponent, I need to find a call. All spade bids are limited and non-forcing, and I want to force to game and explore slam, so I cuebid **two hearts**. Our opponents have nothing to say for now, and partner bids **three diamonds**. I can now show my second suit: **three spades**. My partner raises this to **four spades**. Perhaps I should pass this, but I have reserves of strength and I am inclined to make another move. Blackwood without a heart control doesn't appeal, and since I don't want any confusion, I settle for **five spades**. Partner hurriedly passes, and I hope we are not too high. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
1♥	dbl	pass	2♥
pass	3♦	pass	3♠
pass	4♠	pass	5♠
all pass			

West leads the king of hearts, and when dummy comes down I see that indeed we are too high.

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

West continues with the ace of hearts, and I ruff on the table. I pass the jack of spades to West's king. He now gets out with a diamond, which I win in hand.

If I am going to take another trump finesse, I have to get to the dummy, and that can only be by ruffing the third round of clubs. If the top two clubs live, and there isn't much hope if they don't, I can then lead a third. If West shows out, I can ruff in dummy and take another spade finesse, and if that wins and trumps are 3-2, we will have survived this adventure. If West follows to the third club, I will ruff in the dummy. If East doesn't overruff, I will have to try to drop the queen of spades. This looks like the best plan, so I lead the ace of clubs. West follows with the two, and East the ten. That looks slightly ominous, but there is nothing to do but soldier on. I continue with the king, and West follows with the eight, and East the queen.

It's good that clubs are 3-2, but this fall of the queen is actually not helpful. If East is to be believed, there is no advantage to ruffing a club to get to dummy: if he has the queen of spades, he will use it to overruff. So I should play off the ace of spades, hoping to drop the queen.

Before I do that, I want to give the matter a bit more thought. This particular West does not overcall vulnerable without having either a good suit, or a good hand. Ace-king fifth of hearts and a king would not be enough. Actually, he is quite likely to have at least six hearts, considering East's failure to raise. With six or seven hearts to his partner's three or four, West is less likely than his partner to hold the extra length in either spades or clubs. Playing off the ace of spades is playing him to have the extra length in both, say 3-6-1-3 or 3-7-0-3, or to have the very specific holding of king-queen doubleton. These holdings are possible,

certainly, but seem to be against the odds. Also, if West is 3-6-1-3, then East is 2-4-5-2, and would probably have raised hearts.

Could East have dropped the queen and ten of clubs from three, in an attempt to protect his queen of spades? Perhaps — my hand, and my problem, would have been quite evident. I think this is the likeliest alternative, so I stick with my original intent and lead a third club, the jack. Sure enough, West shows out! I ruff my good jack in the dummy to take a second spade finesse, which surely will win. It does, and trumps split, so I take the rest of the tricks. The full deal was:

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

I was indeed at the table when all this happened, but sadly I was East. The successful declarer was Nader Hanna, in an all-Canadian match in the 2000 NEC cup in Yokohama. Thank you, Nader, for a good story.



RIGA THROW-IN

Playing in an unfamiliar rubber bridge club, I hold

♠ K 3 ♥ 5 2 ♦ A 10 8 7 6 ♣ K J 8 2

Both sides are vulnerable. South, on my left, opens the bidding with **four hearts**. After a pass from my partner, North raises to **five hearts**. I pass, and South concludes an untutored sequence with **six hearts**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			4♥
pass	5♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

Partner leads the eight of hearts, and a moderate dummy comes down:

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

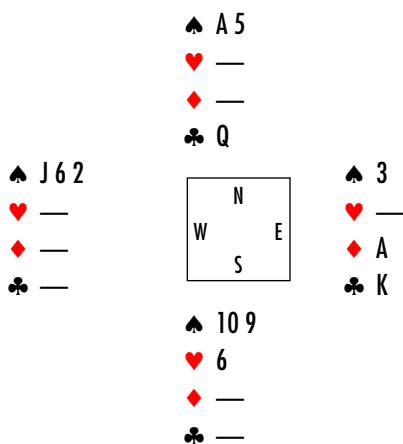
Declarer wins the first trick with the nine, plays the six of clubs to the four and ace, and then plays another club. It looks like declarer is out of clubs, so I play low and declarer ruffs. She then follows with a trump to the queen, on which partner discards the diamond three, and ruffs another club in hand. She now plays the queen of diamonds, small, small.

Thinking quickly, I count declarer for eight heart tricks, a diamond, a club, and a spade. If I take this, I'll have to put dummy in with a diamond, and she will establish a long club. Assuming she has a spade, as it certainly appears, that will be twelve tricks. Not taking time to double-check this, I play low. Declarer now plays the seven of spades to the eight and queen.

I have to win this, of course. How do the cards lie? Partner's diamond discard on the second round of trumps is likely to be from a five-card suit. That would make partner 4-1-5-3, which would be confirmed by the eight of spades. Declarer, then, has no more diamonds and holds two more spades, not including the jack since she hasn't claimed.

If partner has the jack-nine or better of spades, it looks like we have defeated this hand. I can simply get out with the ace of diamonds, and partner will come to a spade. However, if declarer has the ten-nine of spades remaining, she is scheduled to make her twelfth trick by means of a finesse. Is there anything we can do? Well, fortunately I was quick enough earlier. If I now play back a low diamond, declarer may place the ace on her left, and go up ace in the two-card ending. Is there any danger? Some, perhaps, but I don't think declarer will play me for the ace of diamonds when there is any other chance. Even if her spades are small, she will see a possible black suit squeeze on partner.

Hoping for the best, I do return a low diamond. Declarer ruffs, and plays off all her trumps. With three cards to go, we arrive at a curious position:



Victor Mollo reported this deal in his delightful *Bridge à la Carte*. Mme. Dagniya Driba, of Riga, played the hand as described, but the unnamed defender made it easy for declarer by taking the ace of diamonds.

RIGA THROW-IN

LITTLE TRUMPS

As South in a team match, with only the opponents vulnerable, I hold

♠ A K 8 7 3 ♥ A K J 9 ♦ 6 ♣ 4 3 2

I am first to speak and open **one spade**. Left-hand opponent passes, and partner bids **one notrump**. My right-hand opponent also passes, and I show my second suit: **two hearts**. After a pass, partner surprises us all with **four clubs**. This unusual bid is an “out of the blue cuebid”. It shows club control, and very good values for hearts. I now bid **four diamonds**, showing my control, and partner jumps again, this time to **five hearts**. With good values including strong trumps, I am not going to stop here, and I bid **six hearts**. The bidding has been:

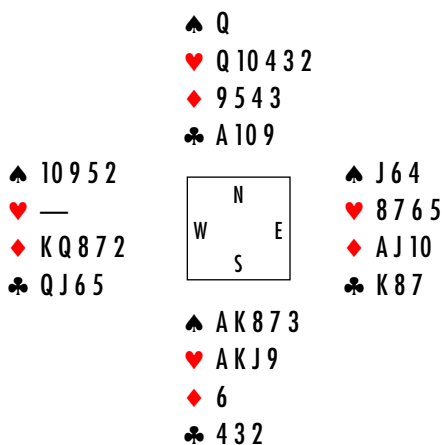
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♠
pass	1NT	pass	2♥
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	5♥	pass	6♥
all pass			

West starts off with the king of diamonds, and I see we have bid a thin slam:

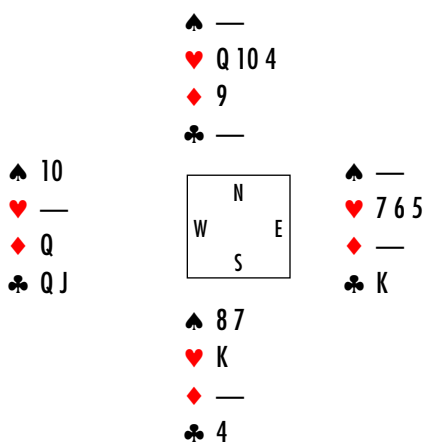
	♠ Q
	♥ Q 10 4 3 2
	♦ 9 5 4 3
	♣ A 10 9
♦ K	
	♠ A K 8 7 3
	♥ A K J 9
	♦ 6
	♣ 4 3 2

East apparently fears a crossruff, for he overtakes with the ace and switches to the eight of hearts. I play the ace, and West discards the seven of diamonds. That's bad. I had been hoping for trumps 2-2 and spades 4-3. Then I could have thrown two clubs from dummy on the ace-king of spades, established the spades with a ruff, and still have had two trumps in dummy to take care of my two club losers. A different plan is required now. I have won the second trick with the ace of hearts. The top spades and the ace of clubs bring me up to five tricks. Trumps will have to provide the other seven, so I will need to score all of them separately. The trumps in my hand are all high. The problem is how to score the little trumps in dummy.

I cross to the queen of spades, and now I have to consider whether or not to cash the ace of clubs before ruffing a diamond. Often, on crossruff hands, one is advised to cash side tricks before the opponents are in a position to ruff them. That is not a big concern here, but I think for a different reason it is right to cash the ace of clubs now. The urgent matter is to score the little trumps in dummy, and that will happen sooner if I get the ace of clubs out of the way. Everyone follows to the ace of clubs, and I continue with a diamond ruff. I proceed to cash the ace and king of spades, throwing clubs. I have to consider now what is the safer ruff in dummy. Clubs, surely, as there is only one more spade out. I ruff a club and ruff the third round of diamonds, to which all follow. I then play a third round of clubs, and when the last little trump stands up I can claim the rest on a high crossruff. The full deal was:



Examine what happens if declarer, upon entering dummy with the queen of spades, mistakenly ruffs a diamond. Then after taking the spades, he can cross to the ace of clubs, ruff the third round of diamonds and ruff a club to arrive at this position:



If South had the lead here, he could ruff a club low and claim. But dummy is on play, and when the last diamond is led, East throws the king of clubs, and there is no way to score the little trump in dummy. It is a matter of timing. There is no hurry about ruffing diamonds, since the South trumps are all high. It is the little trumps in dummy that need taking care of.

I saw the North-South cards in a publication somewhere; I think this deal, like so many other good ones, may have come from Eddie Kantar. I adjusted the East-West cards to illustrate the need to cash the ace of clubs.

SPINGOLD TRUMP TENACE

Playing in the Summer National premier knockout event, with both sides vulnerable, I hold as West

♠ A J 9 ♥ Q 10 8 6 3 2 ♦ A J 8 4 ♣ —

This is a very promising hand, and I am looking forward to developing it, when things take a surprising turn. After two passes, my right-hand opponent opens with **two hearts**, a weak two-bid. I have to pass, clearly, and after a pass on my left partner reopens with **double**. The opening bidder passes, and I have to consider whether there is any reason to bid. Sometimes trumps like this don't play as well as one would think, and if partner holds something like

♠ K Q 6 3 ♥ — ♦ K 10 9 7 3 2 ♣ Q 4 2

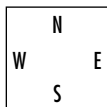
we won't be well off defending. But there is no reason to assume partner has that, and it must be the percentage action to **pass**. North passes as well, concluding a simple auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	pass	2♥
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

Part of my reluctance to pass, which perhaps the reader finds odd, is that I have absolutely no idea what to lead. I settle on the ace of diamonds, and dummy comes down:

♠ K Q 6 4
 ♥ 4
 ♦ Q 10 2
 ♣ K J 8 5 3

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



Partner plays the three, low encouraging. Unfortunately, we play king from ace-king, so declarer is unlikely to go wrong if I continue diamonds. I do, though, playing the four to the ten and king. Partner plays back the six of diamonds, and declarer throws the two of clubs. I have the jack and eight of diamonds left, and partner has the nine. I suppose there might be some position where I need to get off play, so I contribute the jack. Declarer now leads the trump off dummy, East showing out as expected (he would have led a trump, had he had one) with the seven of clubs. Declarer wins in hand with the ace and now leads the eight of spades.

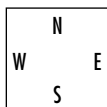
This surely can't be a singleton, as partner would have thrown a spade from five to the ten. I really would prefer partner to win the second round of spades, so I try playing the jack. Declarer wins the queen (deuce from partner, low from even) and plays a second spade, which comes around to my nine. The position is:

♠ K 6
 ♥ —
 ♦ —
 ♣ K J 8 5 3

♠ A
 ♥ Q 10 8 6 3
 ♦ 8
 ♣ —

♠ 10 5
 ♥ —
 ♦ 9
 ♣ A Q 10 9

♠ —
 ♥ K J 9 7 5
 ♦ —
 ♣ 6 4



South's hearts are all just higher than mine, so surely I don't need to play a trump. I play the ace of spades and declarer ruffs. He leads a club, on which I throw my diamond, and partner wins. Now I'm down to all trumps. Partner plays a spade and declarer throws his club, letting me ruff small. Now we fight it out in hearts: declarer wins my six with the seven, returns the nine to my ten, and wins the king-jack at the end. One down.

We lose the match by four IMPs. Later that night, as sleep proves unattainable, I head down into the den and fire up Deep Finesse. I want to see if my brilliant play of the jack of spades should have given us an extra downtrick. To my surprise, and horror, I see that not only was the jack of spades an unnecessary play, but I could have beaten declarer another trick. Go back to the last diagram, and try the effect of leading a trump — any one.

Two things occur to me about this. One is that I was annoyed at partner for not playing the ten of spades on the second round. Thoughts like that are counter-productive. (Actually, partner could have prevented me from making a mistake, by winning the spade ten and playing clubs. But the hand is easier for me — I know what all the hearts are.) Secondly, I thought that it couldn't be right to lead a heart into a proven tenace — I had never seen a position like that. Now I know better.

BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

No one is vulnerable in a local team-of-four league match, when I pick up

♠ Q J 10 6 5 2 ♥ K 4 3 ♦ K 7 3 ♣ A

East on my right opens the bidding with **one notrump**, 15 to 17 high card points. I am surely worth **two spades**. The next hand passes and partner raises me to **three spades**. After a pass by East, I have to decide whether to go on. With controls in all the suits, and long spades, there is something to be said also for three notrump. That certainly could prove to be a disaster, of course, and eventually I decide on the prosaic **four spades**. Everyone is content with that, and the bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1NT	2♠
pass	3♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West chooses a low trump as his opening salvo, and that would appear to be a good choice:

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

This lead may prevent me from ruffing a heart. Sure enough, East takes

both top trumps before shifting to the queen of hearts. I have nine top tricks, and have to consider where to go for a tenth. There is a diamond finesse — let's check on that. East's opening notrump showed fifteen to seventeen high card points. I have thirteen, and dummy has eleven. That leaves at most a jack for West, unless East is out of his range. So the normal diamond finesse is a poor chance, but dummy's nine gives me the option of a backwards finesse: leading the jack, and then finessing the nine if the first round goes jack, queen, king. The queen of diamonds could also be doubleton, with or without the ten, and the king of clubs might be ruffed out doubleton if I mind my entries.

To preserve all the chances, I win the heart shift in hand and draw the third trump, pitching a club from dummy as East throws a heart. It won't hurt to play off another couple of trumps, throwing clubs. West discards first a heart, then a diamond, while East is definitely feeling the pressure. He throws first a club, then the nine of hearts. The position is now:

♠	—
♥	A
♦	A J 9
♣	Q 9 7
♠	2
♥	4 3
♦	K 7 3
♣	A

It looks to me as though East began with a 2-4-3-4 pattern, and that I don't need to rely on the position of the ten of diamonds. I cash the ace of clubs, all following, and cross to the ace of hearts, dropping East's jack. I trump a club, East playing the ten and West the jack. I then cross to the ace of diamonds and pause for a final check.

Dummy's last three cards are the queen of clubs and jack-nine of diamonds. My last three are a heart and king-spot of diamonds. East has the king of clubs, the queen of diamonds, and one other card, which I have been assuming to be a diamond. The ten of hearts is still out, and he could have it, but it would be normal to open one heart with

♠ A K ♥ Q J 10 9 2 ♦ Q 8 ♣ K 10 4 3

All the play signs point to exiting with the queen of clubs, which I do. East wins with the king and returns a diamond, which I run to dummy's jack. The full deal was:

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

As it happens, three notrump would have been easier. The deal came from the enjoyable *Reading the Cards* by David Bird and Marc Smith.



PUNCH AND UNBLOCK

Vulnerable against not at teams, I hold the following shapely hand as South:

♠ — ♥ K Q 10 9 4 ♦ Q 10 6 ♣ A Q 7 6 3

I am the dealer. One heart followed by a club rebid is canapé in our system, and this hand calls for a Roman two bid, showing a minimum to moderate opening with at least five hearts and at least four clubs. I open **two hearts**, and the next hand overcalls **two spades**. Partner raises to **three hearts**, which doesn't promise much as we play it, and the next player leaps to **four spades**. I have a problem now. I have extra shape, and no spades, but it certainly could be wrong to go to the five-level. I wish double showed this sort of hand, but we don't play that way. I decide to plunge on with **five hearts**. West **doubles**, and everyone has had his say. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♥
2♠	3♥	4♠	5♥
dbl	all pass		

West starts off with the king of spades, and I can't honestly complain about the dummy:

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

I must ruff the opening lead. Is there any reason to use a middle trump? I can see dummy's eight of hearts coming into play later, and the situation will be more flexible if I retain a low heart. I see no need to keep high trumps in my hand, so I ruff with the nine. I decide to try a diamond to the king first. If I find East with the ace of diamonds, I'll play West for the king of clubs, and hope for it to be at most once guarded. East does in fact show up with the ace of diamonds, capturing dummy's king and continuing the spade assault. I ruff, with the ten this time, and play the ace of clubs. That drops the jack on my left, and I continue with another club, very gratified to see the king win on my left. West plows on with spades. The position is now:

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

I ruff the third spade with the queen, cash the king as all follow, and lead my carefully preserved four. West follows and I have to decide whether to finesse the eight. If it succeeds, and trumps are 3-2, I will make my

contract, without a diamond finesse. If it fails, it will be messy. The alternative of going up with the ace will succeed if the jack falls, and be just one down if East has jack third, as I will be able to play on clubs to force out the last trump.

The finesse represents the best chance of making five hearts, so with trepidation I call for dummy's eight. Luck is with me, as East follows small. I draw the last trump with dummy's ace, discarding my ten of diamonds, and my hand is high. The full deal was:

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

When this deal occurred in a local IMP league match, the first three bids were as given but then East made the more normal call of three spades, not four spades as I invented for the story. I like the strategic overbid. With four spades and two little hearts, it will never be completely comfortable to defend four hearts, and by bidding four spades immediately you minimize the opponents' ability to exchange information about whether they should double, pass or bid on. The main cost of this approach, once partner understands that raises like this can be made on nothing, is that both four hearts and four spades may be down. That feels relatively inexpensive to me at IMPs. At the table, I bid four clubs over East's three spades, showing my extra shape, and we settled in four hearts. Had the opponents then bid four spades, I would not have felt the need to go to the five-level, and partner would have been in a good position to double.



OLD ADVICE

Playing in the Rosenblum Teams, I pick up

♠ A 8 7 ♥ K 8 4 2 ♦ 6 ♣ K Q 10 9 8

I am South as dealer, with our side vulnerable. I open **one club**, and West comes in with **one spade**. Partner bids **two diamonds**, and East passes. I certainly could show the hearts now, but as partner could have made a negative double with four hearts, I choose to show a minimum with a spade stopper by bidding **two notrump**. Partner carries on to **three notrump** and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♠	2♦	pass	1♣
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

West leads the queen of hearts, and partner puts down a strong dummy:

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

If clubs behave, and it is a bit unlikely for East to be short, I have eight tricks. The ace of diamonds is likely to be onside, but not certain. If it is, I am in good shape, so I should plan for it to be in the East hand. That

means I had better win the first trick, and the next question is: where? I plan to run the clubs, so it looks a little more natural to win the first trick in the dummy, saving the low hearts as potential discards on the clubs. For example, if I pitch a heart and a diamond on the clubs, and then want to play a second and third round of hearts, they will be blocked if I won the first heart with the king. An argument the other way is that if I start clubs with the ace, catering to a holding of all five on my right, then I will need another dummy entry if East turns up with jack fourth.

I think the 5-0 club break is the smaller problem, so I win the ace of hearts, East encouraging with the three. I now play a low club to the king and another to the ace, West turning up with a doubleton jack. When I play the rest of the clubs, West pitches three spades, I let go a heart and a diamond from the table, and East throws a spade and a heart.

Somewhat surprisingly, no one has thrown a diamond. Perhaps both defenders have four. West would have been put off the diamond lead by my partner's bid. If West has four diamonds, then he has a doubleton queen of hearts, which would be consistent with East's encouraging heart at Trick 1. In any case, the safest play now is the king of hearts. West drops the jack, and I continue a heart to set up the long one in my hand. I am happy to see West show out, as my contract is now secure. East wins the heart and plays a spade. I go up with the ace and cash the long heart for my ninth trick. If West had the ace of diamonds all along, I can make a tenth trick by having dummy match his discards. However, East has the ace of diamonds, and I just make my contract. The full deal was:

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

When the hand was actually played, the Pakistani declarer passed the queen of spades after testing clubs. The Polish defenders punished that sharply. Krzysztof Jassem shifted to the jack of diamonds, and Oppenheim carefully unblocked the ten. Three more rounds of diamonds produced down one. That was good defense — the jack catered to declarer's having a singleton ten.

As the play went in the narrative, there was no defense. If East throws a diamond, declarer can set up a spade. It's old advice, but running the long suit is often a good idea.



THIN SLAMS

Playing in a world team event against South Africa, I hold as North

♠ K 9 8 6 3 2 ♥ 9 8 3 ♦ 7 ♣ A K 2

Dealer, West, opens **two diamonds**, which shows a weak two-bid in either major. We play natural overcalls over that, so I bid **two spades**. The next hand competes with **three hearts**, and partner cuebids **four hearts**. Dealer passes, and I have to decide whether to move forward.

This was a minimal overcall to begin with, but it has several things in its favor for slam purposes. It seems likely that partner is short in hearts, where I have no wasted values. I have control of both minors. Although my trumps are internally weak, partner's length may take care of that. I feel this is a strong hand, as the auction has developed, and I continue with **five clubs**. Partner now bids **five hearts**. That's even better! He has no diamond control, so nothing is wasted there. In view of my clubs, it looks like he has good trumps and a heart void. I jump to **six spades**, ending the auction. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♦	2♠	3♥	4♥
pass	5♣	pass	5♥
pass	6♠	all pass	

♠ — ♥ AK7542 ♦ J985 ♣ 863	♠ K98632 ♥ 983 ♦ 7 ♣ AK2	♠ J4 ♥ QJ106 ♦ AKQ3 ♣ J109
---	--	--

♠ AQ1075 ♥ — ♦ 10642 ♣ Q754	N W E S	
---	---	--

I get to sit North for once, since there is nothing to the play. The real life holder of the North cards was Fulvio Fantoni, playing with Claudio Nunes, in the 1994 Rosenblum Teams in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Their well-judged sequence won a slam swing for Italy.

A point made in the narrative is worth repeating. One of the ways for slam to be good despite a lower-than-usual high-card total is for minor honors in trumps to be missing. A fit like Axxxxx opposite Kxxx usually plays for no losers, and perhaps a 2-1 split is needed anyway, for control. I am reminded of undergraduate days at the University of Toronto, where we played every Tuesday night in the grand old building of Hart House. John Guoba opened one spade and my partner, Walter Galloway, doubled. Abe Greenspan, on my right, now jumped to four spades. I had a full opening bid with one spade, three hearts and 5-4 in the minors. I thought it was very mature of me not to double, bidding four notrump for takeout instead. John now bid six spades! I doubled that, but there was no way to beat it. The opening bid was the lowest high-card count for a non-psychic that I have ever seen, then or since:

♠ A x x x x x ♥ x x x x x x ♦ x ♣ —

John was figuring on a heart void opposite. The takeout doubler had promised heart length. Nowadays, common methods over four spades might be responsive doubles and four notrump showing two places to play. At that time, though, we played penalty doubles and four notrump

was takeout for the other three suits. So each opponent promised at least three hearts, and the odds were good that one of us would have four, which would leave none for the dummy. John was out by one on that, but he bought the ace of diamonds and good trumps.

When the partnership has ten trumps in the combined hands, the ace and king are gold — the queen and jack are just nice little extras.



I CAN'T DO IT

Playing in the 1994 Rosenblum Cup against a strong Dutch team, I hold

♠ K 9 5 2 ♥ K 8 6 ♦ A K 6 ♣ J 9 8

The dealer on my right opens **two diamonds**, showing a weak two-bid in either major suit. My usual methods against that are double to show a balanced hand weaker or stronger than a strong notrump, but in this partnership we play double as either very strong, balanced, or a takeout of hearts. I don't know that I can say I have a takeout pattern, but I do have support for all the suits, so I **double**. The next hand passes, as does partner. East apparently does not relish playing in two diamonds doubled, as he removes to **two hearts**. I have nothing to say, and it goes around to partner, who cuebids **three hearts**. After a pass on my right, I have to choose between showing the spades and bidding notrump. With all the losers, it seems clear to me: I bid **three notrump**. Partner is not done, however, and continues with **four hearts**. What does he want from me? I suppose I should own up to a spade suit now, so I bid **four spades**. Perhaps partner has grown tired of this, for he leaps to **six notrump**. That is plenty high enough for me. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		2♦	dbl
pass	pass	2♥	pass
pass	3♥	pass	3NT
pass	4♥	pass	4♠
pass	6NT	all pass	

West leads the six of clubs, and a disappointing dummy comes down:

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

Isn't this dreadful. I wonder if partner thought I was showing the strong type when I bid three notrump rather than three spades. Otherwise, surely he should just raise to four notrump. Desperate for tricks, I play low from dummy. East plays the three, and I win the eight. A glance at the opponents' convention card shows that they lead third best from an even number of cards. If I can get four club tricks, that will get me up to eleven, with endplay chances against East in hearts. If the six of clubs was third best, West will have either Q106, or Q1064. In either case, I can make four tricks.

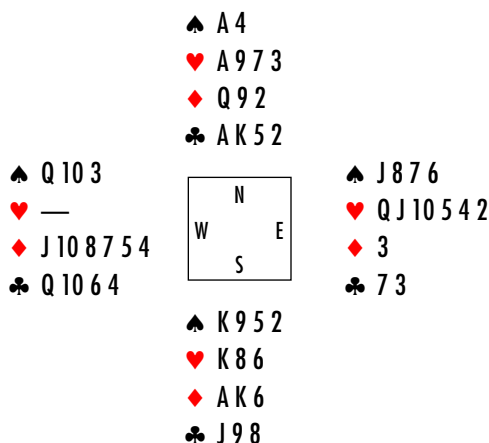
I lead the jack of clubs, West covers with the queen, and I win dummy's king, noting with satisfaction the fall of the seven. I now lead a low heart, prepared to insert the six if East plays low, but he plays the ten and I win the king, West throwing a diamond. Now I lead the nine of clubs, and West covers with the ten. Perhaps he is hoping that I missed a spot, but this time I have been careful. I win the ace and continue with the five, throwing a spade from hand. East sheds two hearts while West disgustedly follows with the four. My plan now is to cash the tops in my hand to reduce dummy to:

♠ A
♥ A 9 7
♦ Q
♣ —

If East keeps fewer than three hearts, I can play ace and another and dummy will be high. Probably he will keep queen-jack-other in hearts.

If he then has one each of spades and diamonds, I can cash the winners in either order before exiting in hearts. If he has two of one and none of the other, I will have to cash the winner in which he is void, squeezing him out of either a heart or his exit card.

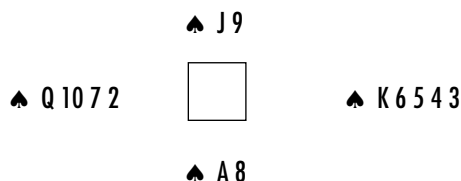
In practice, I don't have to read the position, for East shows out on the second diamond. I show my cards, the full deal being:



The successful real life declarer, playing more or less as described, was Nedju Buchlev of Germany.

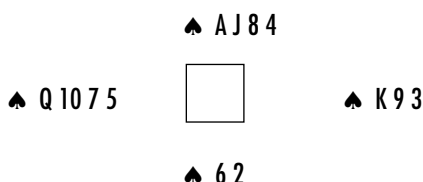
Leading third-best from an even number of cards is a popular agreement. Mostly, proponents of the method argue that it gives a clearer count than traditional fourth-best leads. They point out that the lead of the deuce, in standard methods, can be from three or four, and it may be hard for partner to tell. That's true, but it is also true that if you lead the three from Q932 or Q93, that can be indistinguishable too.

There are other arguments for third-best leads. One is to unblock. Suppose you are leading to three notrump, and the suit is distributed like this:



Now the seven avoids blocking the suit. This is a carefully constructed layout, with East having all the remaining spots lower than the one led, in addition to the ace or king; with J6543, and the opponents' cards 2-2, East might be able to work out to duck. An unblock is much more likely to be necessary with the eight than the seven.

Another time third best can win is if dummy has four, in a suit such as this one:



Now a lead of the seven, given sufficient entries to the West hand, smothers the six and picks up the suit.

As I remarked above, it is popular to lead third and fifth best. I can't do it. A result like the one above, declarer making six notrump on the strength of his five-spot, would be too much to bear. Another objection I have is that a third-best lead often looks high, and I prefer to lead low from an honor and high from spot cards. If you play third and fifth, you probably need to lead low from three small, as well.

I suppose there is an element of prejudice in it, too. I am comfortable with the fourth-best leads I grew up with. Michael Courtney is correct: they are what my grandmother played. I don't mind changing when I am convinced it is to something clearly superior; I found switching to upside-down count and attitude quite easy. But "third and fifth"? Not for me.



IMPROVISING

Preparing for the Rosenblum Teams in New Orleans, 1978, I hold as West

♠ 7 6 4 ♥ A K Q J 7 3 2 ♦ 7 3 ♣ 7

We are vulnerable versus not, and the dealer on my right opens **one spade**. Our jump overcalls are defined as weak but sensible when vulnerable. I make what I consider a middle-of-the-road bid of **three hearts**. North bids **three spades** and the auction comes to an abrupt halt. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
3♥	3♠	all pass	1♠

I am unsure what to lead. Perhaps the singleton club is best, and maybe a simulation would demonstrate it. On the other hand, the opponents have stopped below game, so presumably do not have reserves of strength. That could argue for a safe lead. I decide to lead a high heart. We have no specific agreement about the lead from suits with three or more top honors, so I am improvising when I choose the jack.

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

The jack of hearts holds the trick, partner playing the five. I now shift to the singleton club. Partner wins the ace and returns the eight for me to ruff. He seems to have deciphered what I have been doing and has given me a suit preference signal for hearts. I lead the deuce to his ten, and he gives me another ruff, for one down, the full deal being:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

Isn't it wonderful when partner, Roy Dalton here, correctly plays you to have done something clever!

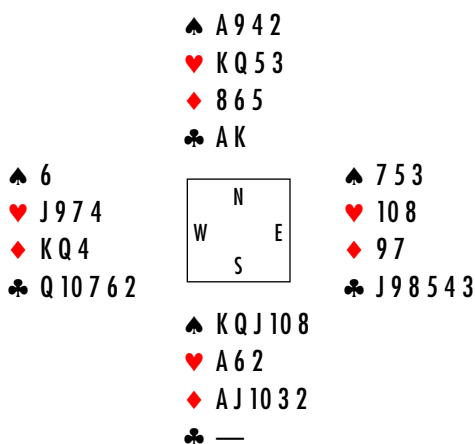


TIMING

One of the joys of my youth was working through *Improve Your Dummy Play* by Eric C. Milnes and Paul Lukacs. This is hand number 1. West leads the six of trumps against your spade slam, and East follows. How do you play?

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

I have nothing at all to add to the solution given by Milnes and Lukacs — I am simply hoping to share my joy with readers who may not have seen their book. Win an honor in hand, and cash the ace of hearts. Cross to the nine of spades and pitch the remaining hearts on the top clubs. Ruff the low heart. Cross to the ace of spades and throw two diamonds on the hearts. The elimination is complete and a diamond to the ten ensures the contract. The full deal is:



Chess has always had a tradition of valuing beauty in composed problems. This is as beautiful a bridge deal as I know. The unblock of the ace of hearts, while still holding two little ones, is simple, elegant and striking. The economy of entry management is perfect; the symmetry of discarding two hearts on clubs and then two diamonds on hearts is enchanting.



TOO CLEVER

Playing against Piotr Gawrys and Krzysztof Lasocki of Poland in the semifinals of the 1994 Rosenblum Cup, I hold as West:

♠ A 6 4 3 ♥ 9 5 2 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ Q J 9

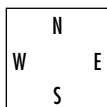
Both sides are vulnerable, and after two passes, Gawrys on my right opens **one notrump**. This is 15 to 18 in the variation of Polish Club that our opponents are playing. Lasocki raises to **two notrump** and Gawrys goes on to **three notrump**. The straightforward bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	pass	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

The lead is far from clear, and I select the queen of clubs.

♠ 8 7 5
♥ 8 7 6
♦ J 10 4
♣ A K 4 3

♠ A 6 4 3
♥ 9 5 2
♦ A 5 2
♣ Q J 9



Declarer calls for the ace, partner plays the five (low encourages) and declarer the eight. Now declarer calls for the jack of diamonds from dummy. Partner plays the six and declarer the three, and now it is my turn.

So often it is right to hold off with high cards, particularly in the early play at notrump. Here there is another consideration. Dummy

has just two entries, and declarer may have multiple plays to make in spades, hearts, and diamonds. If I leave him on the table, he will be in position to make another of those plays. So I take the jack of diamonds with the ace and continue with the jack of clubs. Declarer lets this hold, playing the two from hand as partner follows with the six.

If partner has four clubs, a further club lead will set up another trick, at the cost of letting declarer onto the table. This is very difficult to work out. It seems, though, that if declarer needed nothing more than another entry to table, he could have taken my jack, so I play a third club. Declarer wins the ace, throwing the nine of spades. He now calls for the ten of diamonds, which partner covers with the queen. Declarer wins with the king, cashes the nine, and then produces the thirteenth diamond. Partner may have a difficult discard at this point, so I should try to help him. An encouraging spade would be one way, but I like the nine of hearts. Dummy throws a heart, and partner the two of spades.

Partner has defended well. Declarer now plays ace, king and another heart, but has to surrender his long heart when partner cashes the ten of clubs. Partner leads the ten of spades to Trick 12, but declarer, after a little thought, gets it right by playing the jack. Nevertheless, we have defeated three notrump one trick. The full deal is:

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

At the table, the defender ducked the jack of diamonds. It is so often right to refuse to win a trick, but here it was fatal. Gawrys continued with a diamond to the nine, and later took a heart finesse. When the red

suits both split, that was nine tricks: four hearts, three diamonds, and two clubs.

In effect, ducking the diamond jack gives declarer an extra entry to the table, or rather relieves him of the need for an extra entry. He needs to play diamonds twice and hearts once, and has only two entries, provided you take your ace of diamonds right away. Double dummy, declarer can succeed by winning Trick 1 and taking a heart finesse, then driving out East's queen of diamonds. The whole hand is an amazing double-dummy problem.

BLIND SPOT

Playing in the 1989 Bermuda Bowl semifinals in Perth, Australia, I pick up

♠ 9 ♥ A 10 7 5 4 ♦ Q 10 5 ♣ K 5 4 3

Only the opponents are vulnerable. Dealer, West, passes, and partner opens **two diamonds**. In our methods, this shows a weak two bid in either major, or a strong balanced hand (about 20-21 HCP). East passes. To protect my honors from the opening lead should partner have the weak hand with spades, I call **two spades**. Partner has the strong hand, this time, and shows it with **two notrump**. I bid **three diamonds**, a transfer showing hearts. Partner duly bids **three hearts**, and I show my second suit: **four clubs**. Partner bids **four diamonds**, suggesting a club fit and diamond values. I bid **five notrump**, which asks partner to pick a suit. It would be nice if it offered diamonds as an alternative, but I can't honestly say it does. Partner bids **six clubs**, and there we play. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	2♦	pass	2♠
pass	2NT	pass	3♦
pass	3♥	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	5NT
pass	6♣	all pass	

The opening lead is the king of spades, and this is what I see:

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

This isn't a terrible contract, but six and seven diamonds are interesting alternatives. Successfully landing in the third suit opposite a notrump opening is a rare accomplishment. In any event, I had better pay attention to six clubs. I have seven red winners, the ace of spades, and, assuming clubs behave, three trump tricks. That means one spade ruff will see me home, so there is no hurry about taking it. I win the ace of spades, lead a club to my king as both follow, and lead a club back, West playing the jack.

If clubs are 3-2, I can win the ace and claim. West may have started with four, though, and I should give a moment's thought to that. If I win the ace and get a showout, I will be unable to ruff a spade and lead a club towards the ten, because West will be able to win and cash a spade. In fact, I will be in serious trouble. I will have to try to unblock the hearts, cross on a diamond, play ace of hearts ... Why am I thinking about this? If I simply duck the jack of clubs, I am completely safe unless there is an immediate red suit ruff out, and that is almost impossible. When I play low from dummy, East shows out with a spade. It doesn't matter what West does. He plays a high spade, and I show my cards. The full deal was:

	♠ A 10 4										
	♥ K Q										
	♦ A K J 6										
	♣ A 10 6 2										
♠ K Q J 8 2	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 6 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 9 6		♥ J 8 3 2									
♦ 8 7		♦ 9 4 3 2									
♣ Q J 9 8		♣ 7									
	♠ 9										
	♥ A 10 7 5 4										
	♦ Q 10 5										
	♣ K 5 4 3										

You may think that the interest was primarily in the bidding, and that the play was routine. So it was, but when the jack of clubs was played, two world-class players won the ace! A deal that should have been over was now very much in doubt. At one table, declarer unblocked the king-queen of hearts and crossed to the ten of diamonds. The position was now:

	♠ 10 4										
	♥ —										
	♦ A K J										
	♣ 10 6										
♠ Q J 8 2	<table border="1"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 7 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ —		♥ J 8									
♦ 8		♦ 9 4 3									
♣ Q 9		♣ —									
	♠ —										
	♥ A 10 7										
	♦ Q 5										
	♣ 5 4										

To make the hand at this point, declarer needs to find West with at least one more red card, and a second diamond is likelier than a third heart. For example, the play could go diamond to dummy, spade ruff, ace of hearts. Ruffing doesn't work, either low or high, so say West throws a

spade. Now a heart ruff, spade ruff, and a heart scoring dummy's ten of clubs *en passant*.

Declarer, however, led the ace of hearts in the above position. Now all the defender needed to do was throw his losing diamond, an easy play. Declarer is stymied no matter what he tries. However, the defender ruffed the ace of hearts low, and declarer was once more in a position to claim.

So bridge at the top is far from error-free. In the other semifinal, where the same boards were played, North-South played this very good slam in five clubs at one table (the declarer managed an effortless twelve tricks) and defended one spade doubled at the other, nipping it a trick.

There is very little justification for putting the ace of clubs on the jack, or putting a trump on the ace of hearts, other than fatigue. The Australians were just off a grueling week of qualifying rounds, while Americans, who had a bye to the semifinals, were perhaps still getting over the trip from Los Angeles to Perth.



TAPPED OUT

Playing in the semifinals of the 1989 Bermuda Bowl, I hold as West the following:

♠ Q 6 2 ♥ K Q ♦ K Q J 10 9 6 ♣ J 9

Only the opponents are vulnerable, and South on my right passes as dealer. I open **one diamond**, to which my left hand opponent says **double**. Partner bids **one heart**, and the next hand **two clubs**. This conveniently allows me to repeat my suit: **two diamonds**. That is enough for the next two players, but South reopens surprisingly with a leap to **three spades**. I pass, and if my left-hand opponent is surprised, he doesn't show it, continuing to **four spades**. My partner **doubles**, ending a very unusual bidding sequence:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♦	dbl	1♥	pass
2♦	pass	pass	2♣
pass	4♠	dbl	3♠
			all pass

I start with the king of diamonds, quite curious to see the dummy:

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

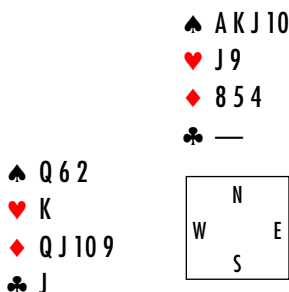
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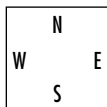
Our opponents seem to be of a school we used to call “clubs on your own”, i.e. the double of one diamond promises support for majors, period. Declarer wins the ace of diamonds, discarding a small heart. He then ruffs a diamond with the four and leads the king of clubs, throwing a heart from the dummy. Partner takes the ace and switches to the deuce of hearts, low from odd. I win the queen and need to find the next move in an unusual situation. The position is now:



It would seem from the auction that declarer started with four small spades and long clubs. From the play, he has no diamonds and two hearts, so seven clubs, which may all be good at this point. The clubs are not a threat, though. South has had to ruff a diamond, so he is down to three trumps and is already tapped out. He will have to ruff a red card to get to hand again, and will never be able to take more than one club trick. What he might be able to do, though, is score eight trumps on a crossruff, to go along with a club and the ace of diamonds. To stop that, I must shift to a trump.

Declarer plays the ten of trumps from dummy, playing the seven from hand as partner follows with the three. He then ruffs a diamond with the eight, cashes the queen of clubs dropping my jack, and continues with the eight of clubs. That might be high, so I ruff with my other low trump. Declarer overruffs in dummy and now the entire cycle goes round once more: diamond ruff in hand, ten of clubs ruffed with the queen and overruffed. That’s the end of declarer’s party, and he comes to nothing more apart from the ace of trumps. We have managed to defeat four spades a trick, the full deal being:

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



Three rounds of hearts would have been fine, too, scoring a trick with the queen of spades. Neither defense was found at the table, and Lorentz-Lester for Australia scored up a game against the United States. At the other table, North chose to pass his 4-4-5-0, long in opener's suit. The bidding continued one heart on his left, three clubs from partner, three diamonds from opener. This is another unusual situation. The cautious approach is to consider that you have just three tricks, and partner hasn't promised anything, so you should pass. The temptation to double proved too strong, but three diamonds proved unbeatable.

The other semifinal pitted Brazil against Poland. At one table, the Poles opened the South hand with two spades, showing four spades, a six-card or longer minor, and 7-12 HCP. After a three diamond overcall, North jumped to four spades and East doubled. The play went along the same lines as in our narrative, but when Roberto Mello won the ace of clubs, he switched to a trump, leaving declarer a trick short and giving his partner no chance to go wrong. At the other table, North overcalled the one diamond opening with one spade on his hundred honors, which would be my choice. The next hand made a negative double, and South jumped to four spades. I don't know if West should bid five diamonds over that, but he did, and that gave North a much happier double than in the first match. Five diamonds doubled went down 300.

TAKE MY QUEEN, PLEASE

Late in a world-level knockout match, we are in need of points when, as South, I pick up

♠ A 9 ♥ A ♦ A 7 4 ♣ AK 7 6 5 4 2

With only the opponents vulnerable, it is my turn after three passes. In our methods, the bid for a powerful unbalanced hand (and other types as well) is **one club**. The dealer comes back in with **one heart**, and partner bids **one spade**. This is natural, but does not promise much: we figure it is important to get a suit in before the opponents remove our bidding space. The next hand jumps to **three hearts**, leaving me a difficult problem. Four clubs would now be natural and forcing, but this hand is going to be impossible to describe to partner. I don't see how we could ever bid seven with confidence, and since I don't wish to stop below slam, I take my shot at **six clubs**. Everybody passes, so the bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	pass	pass	1♣
1♥	1♠	3♥	6♣
all pass			

West leads the king of hearts, and I am eager to see what sort of dummy I have bought.

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

We will need a bit of luck, but this is just the kind of deal that could get us back in the match. Let's see what we can deduce about the lie of the cards. The opponents have bid to three hearts, vulnerable against not, with 15 high card points between them. What is West likely to hold? The king of hearts he has, and likely the queen. At least five hearts, surely, but with six decent ones he is likely to have opened a weak two-bid. In spades and diamonds, a small singleton would have been an attractive lead, unless he has the guarded queen of trumps, a prospect not worth spending too long on. The diamond and spade kings I would guess are in separate hands, since West might not have come in without one, and might have opened the bidding with both.

Should I try to get to dummy to take a trump finesse? No, that would be silly, and not because of how the trumps may lie. My main hope involves throwing my losing spade on the fourth diamond, and I can't negotiate that and a trump finesse, too.

I play off the ace and king of clubs, and the queen falls doubleton on my left. I may as well see what they discard. As I continue with trumps, each opponent throws three hearts, while I throw spades from dummy. On the second-last club, West discards the queen of hearts, and East a spade. The position is now:

♠ Q 7
 ♥ —
 ♦ Q J 8 3
 ♣ —

 ♠ A 9
 ♥ —
 ♦ A 7 4
 ♣ 2

How are the suits splitting? Hearts seem to be 5-5, as I initially figured. Since clubs were 2-2, that means diamonds and spades are both 3-3, or both 4-2 (or both 5-1, but that appears unlikely). How is it for me if diamonds are 3-3? I don't think either of these defenders will release the king of diamonds, whether I lead low or ace and another. They know what I have. They have placed me with the ace of spades, either from the bidding or by suit preference plays in hearts. They know I don't have three spades, or I would have been playing them instead of throwing them away. If the defender with king third of diamonds had the king of spades, I could squeeze-endplay him by playing diamond to the queen, diamond to the ace and then the last trump. But I am quite sure the kings are in opposite hands.

That means playing for diamonds to be 4-2. I can't afford to play off the last trump, as someone, presumably East, has a heart left. It looks like I need someone to have a doubleton king of diamonds, or West to have 10-9 doubleton. So I lead a low diamond, intending to insert the eight, but West follows with the nine. I can afford the queen now, which holds the trick, East playing the five. Both defenders have been very smooth, giving nothing away. It seems that the short diamonds are on the left, and that either West has made a good play from K9 doubleton, or East a good play from K652. Either is possible, although the principle of restricted choice would seem to apply: with ten-nine doubleton, West might equally have played the ten. Somehow, though, it feels like that's what he has. Not at all sure, I call for the jack of diamonds. This turns out to be the right move, for the full deal is:

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

This deal arose in the semifinals of the Bermuda Bowl, in Perth, Australia, in 1989. The declarer was Ron Klinger, playing for Australia. When he led a diamond from hand, West played the nine, dummy the queen, East the five. Klinger reasoned that playing low in the East chair from K652 was a likelier play than the nine from K9 by West. The unlucky American defenders, whose tempo had been flawless, were Michael Lawrence (West) and Kit Woolsey (East).

Give Klinger credit for taking a courageous position. He knew he was bucking the odds by playing for the “miracle” holding. The cold-blooded, mathematical approach is to play for doubleton king. There are ten of those, five on each side. If you try to pick up ten-nine doubleton on the left as well, you risk losing to West holdings not only of king-nine and king-ten doubleton, but also ten-nine fourth, if West puts in the nine or ten. Somehow that looks like a duffer’s play, because it lets declarer play an honor and later finesse the eight. But in fact it gives nothing that didn’t belong to declarer in the first place, and look what it might lead to: nine from ten-nine fourth, queen from the dummy, and low from king and one. And now declarer leads the jack from dummy! The kibitzers would be shaking their heads.

DOUBLE CROSS TRUMP LEAD

Playing in a world teams event, I hold as South

♠ K 9 8 2 ♥ K 5 ♦ A K Q ♣ A 10 5 3

With neither side vulnerable, I am the dealer and open **one club**. West passes, and partner responds **one heart**. After a pass from East, I rebid **one spade**. A jump to two in our methods would suggest an unbalanced hand. Partner jump raises to **three spades**. This is forcing for us, so we must be in the slam range. I jump to **four notrump**, asking for aces, and partner bids **five hearts**, showing two. I continue with **five notrump**, and partner bids **six diamonds**, showing one king. Pushing a little bit, I decide to undertake a grand slam. It is not clear whether we belong in spades or notrump. The potential need to ruff hearts or clubs argues for spades, while the potential trump loser suggests notrump. Deciding on the course that leaves partner an option, I bid **seven spades**, and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	1♥	pass	1♠
pass	3♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	5NT
pass	6♦	pass	7♠
all pass			

West leads the four of spades, and dummy shows up with:

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

Well, we have been fortunate here. We belong in seven notrump, but the opening lead seems to have solved our problem. I have thirteen top tricks, assuming I don't lose a trick to the queen of spades, which East is almost certain to have. Almost certain is not the same as certain, though, so I should spend a few moments pondering unlikely things.

What if West has all five trumps? I might be able to handle that. I would have to score four natural trump tricks, eight side tricks, and a trick ruffing with the king of spades, while West underruffed. I won't spend a lot of time on it, but will my play to the first trick matter? The ace would be fatal, and maybe the six best, but suppose I play the jack. On seeing the showout, I can come to hand, run the eight of spades, and go from there.

Could West have four trumps to the queen? I dismissed the notion at first, but on reflection it seems like a possible double cross. There is an old adage recommending that one always lead a trump against a grand slam. The corollary to that is that declarer, receiving a non-trump lead, should perhaps play the opening leader for the missing queen of trumps. West may have tried to deflect me by leading a trump himself.

Could the lead be a singleton? This seems most unlikely. It would be a risky lead, potentially destroying, or at least endangering holdings like Qxxx, Qxx, Jxxx, J10xx in partner's hand, and relatively safe red-suit leads were available.

Oh, to be in seven notrump! I put up the jack of spades, and East plays the three. I have formed a plan. I follow with the ten of spades from dummy. If East follows low, I will run it. That will lose only to a lead from an original doubleton or queen third, and surely that is possible only if West, in the manner of the Rueful Rabbit, has

temporarily put his queen of spades in with his clubs. On my ten of spades, East shows out! I overtake with the king, run the nine and claim, the full deal being:

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

Being in a grand slam missing five trumps to the queen is perhaps less likely now, in the days of Roman Keycard Blackwood, than it was when this hand was played, in the 1977 Bermuda Bowl in Manila. Better, slower bidding might have found the trick source in hearts and led to seven notrump. The imaginative opening leader was Mike Passell, who succeeded when declarer played the jack on the first round, and followed with the ace. The fictional line given was one suggested by David Bird, in *Famous Leads and Defences*.

In my youth I once led a singleton trump against a slam, and I don't expect to again any time soon. If you think your partner might, be ready with the jack from jack-ten-fourth; declarer is much more likely to credit a lead from ten fourth than jack fourth. And keep your poker face on.



ASSUMPTION vs. INFERENCE

Both sides are vulnerable in a bitterly contested rubber. As South, I hold the following moderate collection:

♠ K 5 4 ♥ Q 10 8 7 4 2 ♦ 7 ♣ K 6 3

East, the dealer on my right, opens the bidding with **one spade**. I pass, as does my opponent on the left. Partner protects with **double**, and the dealer passes. This is a good hand, obviously. Opposite a direct takeout double, I would probably force to game, but since partner may have less here, I content myself with **three hearts**. Partner carries on to game with **four hearts**, and there we rest. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	3♥
pass	4♥	all pass	

West leads the nine of his partner's suit and partner, remarking that he had a little in reserve for a balancing double, spreads his hand:

♠ 9

♠ A 6
 ♥ A J 9 3
 ♦ K J 8 5 3
 ♣ 8 4

♠ K 5 4
 ♥ Q 10 8 7 4 2
 ♦ 7
 ♣ K 6 3

I have a diamond and a club to lose, and perhaps a trump and perhaps a second club, depending on the lie of the cards. It seems that I will go down only if the ace of clubs and king of hearts are both wrong. In addition, if the ace of clubs is wrong, I can try to drop the king of hearts. West, who passed his partner's one bid, will not have both cards. One plan is to test the clubs right away, winning the ace of spades in dummy and playing a club down. If the king loses to the ace, I'll know to try to drop the king of hearts.

There isn't a great deal of danger in that, but there is another way to look at it. Since I will make four hearts whenever the ace of clubs is right, it cannot cost the contract to cash the ace of hearts. If the king of hearts proves to be onside, then the ace of clubs will be, too.

I win the king of spades in hand, and lead the queen of hearts just in case West wishes to cover. I then go up with the ace, though, and am gratified to see the fall of the king. When the ace of clubs turns up offside, I make just four, the full deal being:

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

A club from dummy at Trick 2 would have given East a chance to be a hero. Perhaps he won't play the queen, but why give him the chance? The idea of playing a club first, to find out where the ace of clubs is, is faulty logic. We do not need to *know* where the ace of clubs is. It is enough to assume that it is wrong.

At matchpoints, one could make the argument that playing a club first gives better chances for an overtrick. To decide that, one would have to tentatively place the ace of clubs onside, and then decide

whether it was more likely that West had the king of hearts, or East the king of hearts singleton. There are three holdings where the king is onside, against the one singleton king offside. Against that, whenever West has the ace of diamonds, or a sprinkling of minor honors, he won't have the king of hearts.

A very fine analyst suggested playing clubs first. It's a fallacy you will find expounded throughout the bridge literature, if you keep your eyes open. A slightly different version is this. You have to play the following combination:

♠ A J 2



♠ K 10 3

Your left-hand opponent is known to hold one or two spades. Unless there is something else in it that tells you how to play the spades, cash the ace and finesse against East. But the author goes on to show how some extra sleuthing unearths the fact that West has exactly one spade. Now when you proceed to play a spade to the ace and take the finesse, you do so in complete confidence. But the complete confidence is not worth any tricks; you are taking the same line as when you only knew that West had one or two spades. Complete information is not always required; incomplete information or an assumption may be good enough.

NO CHANCE TO BE BRILLIANT

Playing rubber bridge against strong opponents, I pick up as South:

♠ 10 5 3 ♥ A 10 3 ♦ K Q 5 ♣ A 9 5 4

We are vulnerable, the opponents not. Partner opens **one club**. My right-hand opponent jumps to **three hearts**. I have a good hand for clubs, but the practical bid is **three notrump**. That concludes a brief auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	3♥	3NT
all pass			

West leads the eight of hearts, and partner puts down a moderate collection.

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

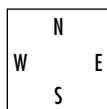
There are six tricks on top. If clubs play for four tricks, I can try for four spade tricks, or I can play to knock out the ace of diamonds on my left, adding one to my trick count. I will then probably need the spade finesse, and if clubs don't divide, I'll need to find a trick by a squeeze or endplay. Now, what about the first trick? I should hold off one round,

I think. I have plenty of losers and East could have only six hearts. If East continues, I think I'll take the second heart, keeping a potential exit card and threats against both opponents.

I let East win the jack of hearts at Trick 1, and take his continuation of the king with my ace, as West discards the diamond four. I have decided to play on diamonds, because the ace is likely to be on my left, and it is unlikely that I can run eight black tricks. I could play the king from hand, but I see an advantage to starting diamonds from dummy. How shall I get there? Both black suits look fairly secure, but I see a danger in crossing on a spade. I may want later to force West to break spades, by throwing him in on the fourth club. If I have played a round of spades prematurely, I may have given West a chance to be brilliant, by exiting with the *queen* of spades, blocking the suit. With this in mind, I cross to dummy's king of clubs (all follow) and lead the two of diamonds. East plays the six, the lowest one out, so I play small. West wins the eight, cashes the ace of diamonds, and exits with a third diamond, East following with the jack on the third round.

If the clubs divide, that will be eight tricks, and at most a singleton spade for East, so I will be able to cash one top spade and claim on a finesse. I cross to the queen of clubs, and East discards a heart. So West has four clubs, four diamonds, a heart and therefore four spades. If they are small, I can drop East's queen of spades, play a third round to my ten, and exit in clubs. West will have to give the last trick to the jack of spades. That would be pretty, but I see no reason to go against the four-to-two odds that West has the spade queen. I play ace and a club to him, and play low on the spade return. All is well, the full deal being:

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



This hand is quite remarkable at double dummy. Declarer's line of crossing on a club at Trick 3 and playing a diamond is successful, but it would fail if West's pitch at Trick 2 had been the *eight* of diamonds, unblocking. On that defense, declarer's only safe way home is to play four rounds of clubs, without touching spades. That is perhaps the best single-dummy line. If West exits with a diamond, finesse spades and throw him in on the fourth round of them, too, making the ninth trick in diamonds. I am indebted to H. W. Kelsey for the deal, which appeared in *Bridge Logic*.

FOUR CARD OVERCALLS

Playing in the Bermuda Bowl, I sit South as dealer, our side vulnerable, and hold

♠ K Q 8 2 ♥ 2 ♦ A 9 8 7 5 ♣ Q J 7

I open **one diamond**. After a pass on my left, partner responds **one heart**, and East comes in with **one spade**. I pass, as does West. Partner says **double**, which in our methods is competitive. East passes, and I have a problem. I certainly could pass, but that seems to be a big position, so I bid **one notrump**. Partner raises me to **two notrump**, giving me another problem. I have little to spare in the way of high card points, but the spades are strong, and the diamond intermediates good. I go on to **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	1♠	pass
pass	dbl	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

West starts with the ten of his partner's suit, and this is what I see before me:

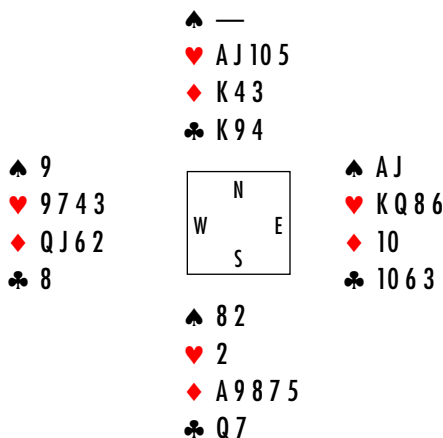
	♠ 7 3
	♥ A J 10 5
	♦ K 4 3
	♣ K 9 4 2
♠ 10	
	♠ K Q 8 2
	♥ 2
	♦ A 9 8 7 5
	♣ Q J 7

East plays the four (reverse attitude) and I win the king. With no more than three tricks in the majors, it looks like I will have to build tricks in both minor suits. I would rather lose the lead to East first, since that might shut out his spade suit; also, I have no fear of a heart shift from that side. Since the overcall makes both the ace of clubs and shorter diamonds more likely to be on the right, it must be right to play clubs first. Clubs also has the potential to create three extra tricks. I run the jack of clubs to East's ace, and he returns the five of spades. That's interesting; unless East is teasing me, West must have the nine of spades. In any event, I must go in with the queen, because to concede another spade and have a heart come through the dummy would not be good. West follows with the six.

If my view of this is correct, East has four spades to the ace-jack. He is a vocal proponent of four-card overcalls at the one-level, particularly with a very strong suit or when unbalanced and long in the suit bid on the right. Well, ace-jack fourth certainly isn't a strong suit, but he could be long in hearts. I suppose he could also have a strong balanced hand that wasn't suitable to one notrump or a takeout double; actually the failure to double strongly suggests holding fewer than four clubs.

If the diamonds are 3-2, I can just concede one. Assuming that I am right about the spades, the defense will have only four tricks. I can try to lose the diamond to West, just in case East found a funny spade play with a five-card suit. What are my chances if diamonds are 4-1? The normal play with this suit combination, king and another, will handle a singleton honor on the left. Is that so likely, though? West passed the one spade overcall, non-vulnerable, with ten-nine third of spades — is he likely to have a singleton as well? It's possible, I suppose. What if East

has a singleton honor? Then I am better off starting with the ace. Suppose the position is like this:



I lead a diamond to the ace, and then a high spot through West. If he splits, I will drive out his other diamond and make my contract in comfort, so let's say he lets my spot hold. East can afford a heart, but when I follow with a diamond to the king, he is squeezed.

That's all very well, but if East has a singleton diamond he is quite likely to be 4-5-1-3, and then I can make nine tricks so long as he has at least one heart honor. I cash the king of diamonds and all follow low. On the second diamond, East discards a heart. Now I hope I have read the distribution correctly. I cash the king of clubs and play a club to the queen, all following. Next I play a heart to the ten, and after winning that and making his two spades, East has to lead into dummy's ace-jack of hearts and thirteenth club. I make my contract, the full deal being:

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

In the event, the Americans were represented by Kit Woolsey, West, and Michael Lawrence, East; the Brazilian declarer was Marcelo Branco, who played the hand as described. There is something about this hand I don't know, and about which both the *Bridge World* report and tournament book are silent: what did Woolsey play on the second round of spades? If he played low, as described in the text, declarer is on reasonably firm ground in assuming that East has only four spades. If Woolsey played the nine, it will seem to the declarer that spades are 5-2.



LIKE A DREAM

In a world-level team-of-four match, I am South and hold

♠ 9 8 7 6 4 ♥ A 9 6 3 ♦ 7 4 2 ♣ 2

No one is vulnerable, and the dealer on my left opens **one heart**, showing at least five. Partner says **double**, and my right-hand opponent bids **two clubs**. I have only four points, all in a suit bid by my left-hand opponent, but a five-card spade suit is not to be sneezed at. I bid **two spades**. The dealer passes, and partner introduces **three diamonds**. East passes, and I have to consider this sequence. Generally, a new suit by the takeout doubler is forcing when advancer has jumped or bid freely, so I raise to **four diamonds**. Partner goes back to **four spades**, and there we rest. The bidding has been:

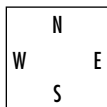
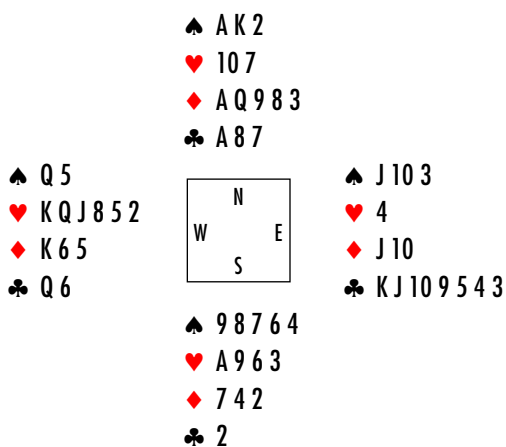
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1♥	dbl	2♣	2♠
pass	3♦	pass	4♦
pass	4♠	all pass	

West leads the queen of hearts, Rusinow (second highest) and partner puts down a suitable dummy:

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

We don't have a lot, and I guess you could say I am to blame for that. The hands fit well, though, and if the splits are friendly, which maybe they are since we aren't doubled, perhaps it will all turn out. I have sure losers in hearts, diamonds and spades, so there is no margin for error. Assuming the necessary splits, I have ten tricks: four spades, four diamonds, and two aces, so I don't need a heart ruff in dummy. What I need to do is lose my diamond trick in such a way that the defense cannot hurt me. For example, if I take the first trick and play a diamond to the nine, East might win, return a heart, and overruff dummy with a doubleton trump. On the other hand, if I draw two rounds of trumps before losing the diamond, someone may be able to draw a third round and play hearts. I would like to lose the diamond to East when he has no heart left. Then they won't be able to hurt me. East is more likely to have a doubleton heart than a singleton, so I duck the first trick. If he turns out to have a singleton, I will have to hope that he has the long spade, which is likely enough.

West continues with the jack of hearts, and after a bit of thought, East discards a club. My guess is that he has three spades and doesn't think it advantageous to ruff my losing heart with a potential trump trick. I win the ace, and lead a diamond to the five, nine, and ten. East returns the king of clubs, which I take with the ace. I cash dummy's top trumps, all following, and ruff a club. This hand is playing like a dream! I finesse the queen of diamonds, dropping the jack, and claim my contract. The defense can ruff in whenever they like; a heart ruff will provide entry to the remaining diamonds. The full deal was:



The real life declarer took the first heart, which looks wrong to me, but made his contract along the lines described.

ONE TO REMEMBER

Both sides are vulnerable, and our rubber bridge opponents are playing four-card majors and strong notrumps. I am East, and hold

♠ A 7 ♥ J 10 8 7 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ 8 7 6 3

South, on my left, deals and opens **one club**. Partner passes, and North responds **one spade**. I pass, and South rebids **one notrump**, showing 13-15. North raises to **two notrump**, and South goes on to **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

Partner starts us off with the six of spades:

	♠ Q 10 5 4	
	♥ Q 5 3	
	♦ J 9 3	
	♣ A Q 10	
♠ 6	N WE S	♠ A 7 ♥ J 10 8 7 ♦ A Q 8 ♣ 8 7 6 3

This is a rather imposing dummy. Let's see what we can figure out. The one notrump rebid showed 13-15, so for the game acceptance let's give declarer 14-15. Dummy has 11, as do we. That leaves partner with 3-4. Partner seems to have started with a fourth-best lead, in spite of dummy's spade bid. I rather doubt that he would do that from just the

jack, so I tentatively place him with the king or king-jack. That leaves declarer in possession of the missing ace and kings. In our opponents' four-card major style, declarer is likely to have at least four clubs. Counting tricks, that gives him four clubs and three hearts off the top, and slow tricks in diamonds and spades. A fifth club will see him home for sure, so let's place him with four. Now consider spades. Partner is likely to have five, to lead a suit the opponents have bid. Furthermore, if he had only four, he probably would have a four-card red suit to lead instead, and opener might have raised spades, either immediately or over two notrump, with 3-2-4-4 or 3-4-2-4. If opener has two spades and four clubs, he will be 4-3 in the red suits. Either way is possible, but since the normal opening with both minors is one diamond, I place opener with 2-4-3-4.

I don't see any way to beat this by force. Declarer will come to nine tricks given time, by first playing spades, and if necessary, diamonds. Our main advantage is that declarer does not know how the diamonds lie. If he doesn't have the ten, I can give him a problem by switching to the queen, after winning the ace of spades. That's just what I would do with AQ10xx, and that's what I have to hope declarer plays for. I put this plan into action, winning the ace of spades (three from declarer) and playing the queen of diamonds. Declarer thinks about that for a while, eventually playing the three as partner plays the five. Whether partner should encourage with four diamonds is debatable, as it may help declarer choose what to play for, but I am going to continue regardless. I cash the ace of diamonds, and play a third round to declarer's king. Declarer plays off the clubs, then the hearts, and eventually finishes a trick short, the full deal being:

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

This deal is based on one from another book I remember fondly from my teenage years, the *First Pocket Book of Bridge Problems* by Ewart Kempson. I didn't own a copy, but borrowed one and avidly worked through all the problems. I hadn't seen the book for years, when a dear friend passed away, bequeathing me his bridge library, and there it was.

The original deal was a declarer play problem — what to do when East wins Trick 1 and shifts to the queen of diamonds. Kempson suggests that the likely holding for South is AQ10, and that the best shot is to duck, hoping that East has five diamonds. I suspect that this would be as true today as it was in 1961. The original East hand given was:

♠ A 7 ♥ J 8 ♦ A Q 10 8 4 ♣ 8 7 6 3

But the queen from AQx is possible. An even more difficult play, in that it requires playing partner for A10xx or K10xx, is the queen from a hand such as:

♠ A 7 ♥ J 8 7 4 ♦ Q 8 4 ♣ 8 7 6 3

That would be one to remember.

ALL BUT ONE

In a tough team-of-four match, I hold as South

♠ 6 ♥ A Q J 9 6 ♦ 6 5 3 ♣ 8 7 5 2

Both sides are vulnerable, and the dealer on my right is East, who opens **one diamond**. Perhaps I shouldn't be bidding, but being one who can't resist a good suit, I overcall **one heart**. The next hand passes and partner cuebids **two diamonds**. East passes, and I must of course sign off with **two hearts**. Partner considers that for a while, and then, appearing to grow tired of the whole business, leaps to **six hearts**. Let's hope I have a play for that! The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	1♥
pass	2♦	pass	2♥
pass	6♥	all pass	

The opening lead is the queen of diamonds, and I have to consider my play to the first trick.

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

One idea is to win the ace, draw trumps, finding them 3-2, and cash the

spades, throwing the remaining diamonds and a club. Now ruff a diamond to hand and take a club finesse. East will win and play a diamond; ruff that and take another club finesse.

That's a decent line if you think there is a fair chance of finding a club honor onside. The opening bid makes that rather unlikely, since this competitor is one who tends to have his values. I'm going to look a little further. It should be possible to put pressure on East, and then strip him of diamonds prior to taking a club finesse.

I win the ace of diamonds and start to draw trumps, careful to begin with the eight, and follow with the ten. East has the doubleton king. I draw the third trump, and then play one more round, pitching a diamond from the table. Leaving the last trump in my hand, I start to run dummy's spades. East follows to the second round, and I must consider my discards. I am planning to throw both the diamonds, but I can afford to throw a club first, just in case the third diamond is worth anything. East, who discarded diamonds on the third and fourth trumps, follows to two spades, and now discards a club. I throw a diamond and play dummy's last spade. East throws the jack of diamonds, and I discard my last diamond. The position is now:

♠	—
♥	—
♦	10
♣	A J 10
♠	—
♥	9
♦	—
♣	8 7 5

East had two cards in each major, and I am playing him for the king-queen of clubs. The missing diamonds are the king and nine. It looks as though East is down to the king of diamonds and the king-queen-club, having started with 2-2-5-4. I plan to ruff dummy's diamond, and endplay him with a club to the ten.

Is there any chance that he is down to 2-2 in the minors? Yes, he's good enough to do that. I could counter with the ten of clubs from

♠ AKQJ
 ♥ 10 8 3
 ♦ A 10 7
 ♣ AJ 10

♠ 10 8 7 5 3 2
 ♥ 7 5 2
 ♦ Q
 ♣ 9 4 3

♠ 9 4
 ♥ K 4
 ♦ K J 9 8 4 2
 ♣ K Q 6

♠ 6
 ♥ A Q J 9 6
 ♦ 6 5 3
 ♣ 8 7 5 2

N
 W E
 S

The deal came from H.W. Kelsey's wonderful *Challenge Match*. Kelsey's declarer made the contract on a different line. He took the first trick, ran the eight of hearts, but then continued with a low heart. When the king of trumps came up doubleton, declarer continued with three rounds of spades, throwing diamonds, and a diamond ruff with a high trump. West showed out on this, so when declarer played a trump to dummy's ten and cashed the fourth spade, East had no scope for deception.

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is not an unlikely club holding when East has four hearts, given that five or more diamonds is likely. The line in the text would succeed against 1-4-5-3, but that is unlikely given West's silence — I would have bid on the hand he had.

The main danger in Kelsey's line, which he alluded to, is that a clever East might play the king of trumps on the second round while retaining a low one, subsequently putting it to good use ruffing a spade.

AMUSING WAY TO GO DOWN

The dealer on my right in a team-of-four game opens **one spade**. Only our side is vulnerable, and I hold:

♠ A K ♥ 8 6 5 ♦ K J 7 3 2 ♣ A 7 4

This is not enough for one notrump, with seven of the points going to make only two tricks, and the diamonds are wrong for a two-level overcall, so I **double**. Some people would be put off by the poor heart support, but for me this is the happiest alternative. After a pass by next hand, partner forces with **two spades**, and dealer passes. Now I could show my five-card suit, certainly, but I think with two full stoppers I should look no further than **two notrump**, which partner raises to **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♠	dbl
pass	2♠	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads off with the nine of spades, and a pathetic dummy appears:

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

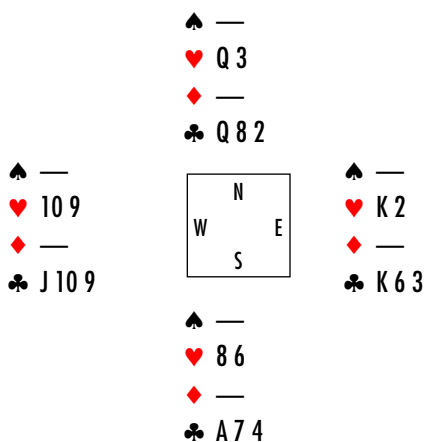
“Well, what would you bid?” asks partner, in reply to my grimace. He has a point. A common treatment nowadays, anathema to older players, is to bid one notrump. That shows the values and avoids playing in a ridiculous fit. If the opponents run spades against one notrump, we may have plenty of junk for the pile.

I will need four diamond tricks, which together with the top cards will give me eight tricks. It would seem that East has the missing ace and kings, so the idea must be to run the diamonds and exert pressure on him, ultimately scoring a trick with one of dummy’s queens.

Playing diamonds from hand will fail badly if East has singleton ace, so I should consider what will happen if I cross to dummy with the ace of hearts to play diamonds. East will win at some point and knock out my other spade stopper. Now if diamonds run, I can reduce everyone to five cards. East can’t keep three spades, since I would know that his other two cards are kings, and I would cash the ace of clubs. If he keeps two spades, one of the kings will be bare, and to make my contract, I need to guess which. Defenders often try to keep enough winners to beat 3NT, preventing declarer from simply knocking out one of their stoppers. Here, I have no ninth trick establishable by force, and East can give me a problem even if he throws all his spades. Suppose, for example, he holds

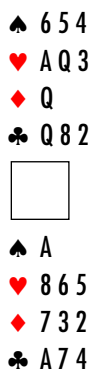
♠ Q J 10 8 3 ♥ K J 2 ♦ A 5 ♣ K 6 3

On a heart to the ace, he may unblock the jack. On winning the ace of diamonds, he knocks out my other spade. Suppose on the run of the diamonds he throws away all his spades, and we come down to this ending:



Now I can lead a heart and let West win. When he shifts to a club, I can win and throw East in with the king of hearts, scoring the queen of clubs at the end. But if East has three hearts in this ending, I must cover West's heart, keeping him off play.

Against a strong competitor, I don't think I can afford catering to a singleton ace of diamonds. Pursuing a different idea, I lead the king of diamonds from hand. My idea is to knock out the ace of diamonds, win the spade return, and win the third round of diamonds in dummy. If East started with five spades and two or three diamonds, I can throw him in with a spade. I will be able to discard two hearts and a club, and assuming he has both outstanding kings, there won't be any card-reading necessary. When I lead the king of diamonds, though, East lets me win. I follow with the jack, which holds also! It's time to think again. The position is:



East has defended strongly. If spades are 5-2, I can continue with my endplay plan by cashing the ace of spades before exiting in diamonds. If spades are 6-1, though, I will have found an amusing way to go down. I must consider what happens if I retain the ace of spades while dislodging the ace of diamonds. East will return a spade, and I will run my diamonds to come down to:

♠ 6
 ♥ A Q 3
 ♦ —
 ♣ Q 8

 ♠ —
 ♥ 8 6 5
 ♦ —
 ♣ A 7 4

If East keeps three spades in this ending, I can just cash both aces, knowing a king will fall. And if East keeps just one spade, I can cross to the ace of hearts and throw him in with a spade (which is why I need to keep a little heart on the table). So East should keep two spades, two kings, and two other cards. Now I will play the ace of the suit I judge him more likely to be short in. If the king doesn't fall, I will continue the suit, succeeding unless East's hand is high except for the other king.

I think this plan is superior to risking a 6-1 spade break by playing off the ace. I exit a diamond to East's ace, West throwing a heart, and win the spade return, noting that West follows suit. I now cash the two long diamonds, throwing a spade and a club, and watch the pitches. There will be no problem if East throws no spades or two spades, and I have decided what to do if East throws one spade. Unless I get information that suggests otherwise, I am going to play ace and another in the suit that East discards. That way, he can never fool me by baring a king — I go down only if he was dealt a singleton king to begin with. In fact, he throws a heart and a spade, and I play a heart to the ace. This brings down East's king, so I cash the queen and throw him in with a spade, winding up with an overtrick. The full deal was:

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

This fascinating deal appeared in Kelsey's *The Needle Match*. The East-West cards were different, supporting Kelsey's suggested line, which was to lead a heart to the ace and play the first diamond from dummy. I have no quarrel with that line; it is difficult to judge whether the greater danger is a singleton ace of diamonds or misreading the ending.

Playing rubber bridge at the club, no one vulnerable, I deal as South and hold

♠ K 9 5 ♥ A 8 5 ♦ A 10 9 ♣ A J 10 5

I open **one notrump**. West passes, and partner raises to **three notrump**, ending a very simple auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

The opening lead is the king of hearts, and partner puts down a good dummy:

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

I have eight top tricks. Diamonds is the only place to go for more, and there are different ways to play them. I also have to decide how long to hold off the heart ace. I have no idea how many hearts West has: five, four, three, even two or seven. Surely I should duck at least once. East plays the seven and I the five. West continues with the queen. Now, it could be right to win this trick. For example, if West held

♠ Q 10 3 ♥ K Q 10 9 3 ♦ K 8 ♣ 8 7 4

now the winning line is to take the second heart and play four rounds of clubs. If West lets go a spade, cash the spade tops and endplay him with a heart.

But this risks going down on many other normal hands. I let West hold the second trick, and he plays a third heart, East pitching a club. Now I'll be down if West has the guarded king of diamonds, unless something unusual happens. I play off all the clubs, everyone throwing spades. I follow with the ace of diamonds, all playing low, and the ten. East wins the jack, but I take his spade return with the king and play another diamond to establish the queen, and finish with nine tricks. The full deal was:

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

This is a kind of everyday deal. It was in the second *Pocket Book of Bridge Puzzles* by Alfred Sheinwold. The analysis in these old books is excellent, so it was surprising to me that the author suggested running the ten of diamonds after winning the third heart. I like that line at matchpoints, making an extra trick when East has ♦KJx, but at rubber bridge it wouldn't pay to risk losing to a singleton king of diamonds on the left. Studying errors is useful; I make a point of trying to analyze my own, even when it costs sleep. Perhaps bludgeoning out a suit like this is too easy.



EASY TO MISS

In a good team-of-four match, both vulnerable, I hold as South

♠ A 9 8 6 ♥ K 10 7 ♦ 8 7 5 ♣ K Q 9

Partner opens the bidding with **one club**, and the next hand passes. I confess to being drawn by the allure of one diamond or two notrump, but I suppose it is irresponsible to bid anything but **one spade**. Partner raises to **two spades**. Now three clubs would be fine if I knew partner would take it as forcing, but since I don't I decide to take a shot at **three notrump**. If partner has four spades and reason to do so, he can take me back to spades. Everyone passes, the bidding having been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	2♠	pass	3NT
all pass			

West kicks off with the five of hearts, and this is what I see:

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

I would like to play the next club from dummy, but it is not clear how to get there. A spade finesse is very risky, and even four spade tricks doesn't get me to nine. A spade to the king followed by a club looks better. Then if an honor comes up, I will have my four club tricks. I see a problem with that, though. It will be fine if the jack appears. However, if East plays the ace and I play low, he may not make it easy for me by playing hearts. He may instead attack the ace of diamonds, while the clubs are blocked.

It is starting to dawn on me. The king of spades is the protected entry to the clubs — I must save it for later. Instead, I cross to the *ace of diamonds*. Then a second club goes to East's ace, West following small. Now I am safe unless East has four diamonds to cash. He plays a heart, and I scamper home with my nine tricks. The full deal was:

♠ K J 7
 ♥ A
 ♦ A 6 3 2
 ♣ 10 7 6 3 2

♠ 5 3 2
 ♥ Q 9 8 5 4
 ♦ 10 4
 ♣ J 8 5

♠ Q 10 4
 ♥ J 6 3 2
 ♦ K Q J 9
 ♣ A 4

♠ A 9 8 6
 ♥ K 10 7
 ♦ 8 7 5
 ♣ K Q 9

N
 W E
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Somehow it is easy to miss the loser-creating, entry-spending play of crossing to the ace of diamonds. This was a more typical example of the thoughtful, interesting deals in Alfred Sheinwold's *Pocket Book of Bridge Puzzles, Number 2*.

ALL IN GOOD TIME

Playing with a familiar partner in a local team-of-four league, I pick up the following as South:

♠ Q 9 6 5 2 ♥ Q 4 ♦ 7 ♣ K J 10 5 2

Partner opens **one diamond** second in hand, and East passes. No problem yet — I bid **one spade**. West comes to life with **three hearts**, partner bids **four hearts**, showing a strong raise, and this is passed to me. I have more than I might, but we are playing a strong club system, so I see no justification for bidding more than **four spades**. Everybody passes, making the bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	pass	1♠
3♥	4♥	pass	4♠
all pass			

West starts with the two of hearts (third best from even, low from odd) and partner presents me with a highly suitable dummy:

♥2

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

Dummy's ace wins, as East plays the three (low encouraging). Prospects are good; unless I am unlucky in both black suits, or suffer a pair of ruffs, I should make this.

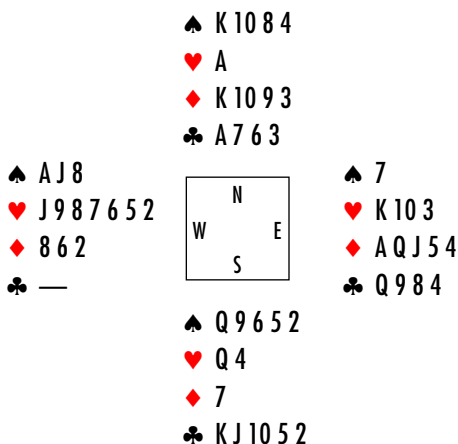
How should I play trumps? Before I commit myself, I should consider what West is likely to have for his delayed entry into the auction. The usual reason is a shapely hand unsuited to an opening preempt. That can mean a defensive card or two and a bad suit, although why that makes bidding three hearts better later I must confess I don't know. The division of the hearts suggests that West is more likely to be short in trumps than East. Ordinarily I would therefore prefer to start with a low card from hand, but there is no convenient way to get there. I could play a diamond, but I might then be setting up a diamond overruff. I'm going to lead the king from the table, and perhaps later finesse East for the jack. If I lose to AJ bare, I'll have to get the clubs right. West takes the king with the ace, and plays another heart, forcing the dummy as East follows with the ten. When I play a second trump from dummy, East throws a low diamond.

I haven't done too well so far. Is there any point to ducking this trick, to force an entry to dummy in trumps? That's dangerous, because it is starting to look as though West has no clubs. If that is the case, if I play low on the trump he can win, cross on the ace of diamonds, and get a club ruff for one down. I win the trump queen and review the situation, which is:

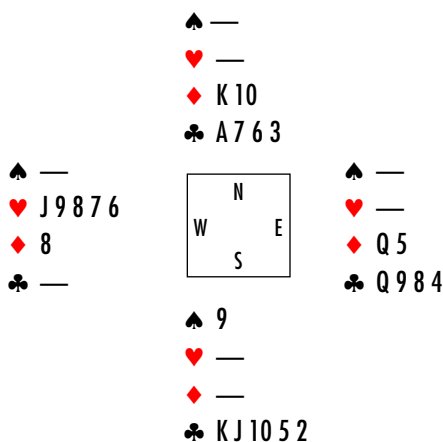
♠	10
♥	—
♦	K 10 9 3
♣	A 7 6 3
♠	9 6 5
♥	—
♦	7
♣	K J 10 5 2

If clubs are as I think, West will show out if I lead one up. I can then take a proven club finesse, and all will be well if West ruffs in — I'll have a trump entry to finesse clubs again. But if West discards, I'll be badly placed.

There is no hurry with clubs — all in good time. I play a diamond first. West follows low, and I need to consider what to play from the table. I think West would have opened the bidding if he held the diamond ace, in addition to ace-jack third of spades and the seven hearts to the jack I am placing him with. If he has no clubs, he will have three diamonds. Suppose they include the queen or jack, and I put on the nine. East, upon winning, will be unable to return diamonds without giving me either an entry or two tricks. I like this, so I put on the nine, and East wins the jack and goes into a trance. Eventually he plays a club, solving my problems. This is the full deal:



At first I thought East had erred by not returning the ace of diamonds in the endgame. I see now that that would have been a stronger defense, but not enough if I read the cards correctly. I can ruff and concede a trump to West, arriving at this position:



If he now plays a heart, I can throw a club from the table and East will be squeezed. Better is for West to play a diamond, which forces me to win on the table and take a first-round club finesse.

The contract and opening lead were the same at the other table, but declarer led a low trump to the queen instead of leading the king. West won, and forced dummy with a heart. After cashing the king of spades, declarer was inconveniently on the table. A first-round club finesse works, obviously, and so does transposing into the line I took by leading the nine of diamonds. But declarer led the ace of clubs, and could no longer make his contract.

As I remarked earlier, passing and then bidding on a hand like West's is not to my liking. I prefer to open a weak two hearts, if available. I know that is an abomination in many people's minds. Another course, taken by our teammates, is not to bid at all. That doesn't work well here; East-West are very close to a slam in hearts. Only a diamond lead, or an attack on dummy's trumps with the spade king, will hold West to eleven tricks.



SHOWING HIS TICKET

The event is a local team-of-four tournament, with an enticing prize for impoverished young bridge players: four round-trip flights to Las Vegas for the Summer Nationals. All the keen players are having a go at it. Early in the semifinal, I pick up as South:

♠ K 5 ♥ A J 10 9 4 ♦ A 8 ♣ A J 7 3

We are vulnerable, and the opponents are not. West deals and opens **two spades**. This is a weak two-bid, marked as 6 to 10 points on the convention card. My partner says **double**. East ups the ante by bidding **four spades**. We should be able to beat that quite handily, and I think about the mathematics of it. This is 1979, “old scoring” times. Non-vulnerable, the first doubled downtrick is worth 100, and the rest are 200, so penalties are 100, 300, 500, 700, 900 etc. (I wish this had never been changed. Why do we have to mess with a good thing and disrupt the game’s history?) So if declarer takes nothing but five spade tricks, that would be -900 for an 11-IMP pickup against +1430. I may not make it, but I am going to try **six hearts**. West and North are content with that, but East gives it a little thought in the passout chair before entering the contract in his scorecard. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
2♠	dbl	4♠	6♥
all pass			

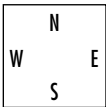
West leads the ace of spades, and I await the dummy with interest.

♠ Q 4
 ♥ K 8 7 3
 ♦ K Q 9 4
 ♣ K 6 5

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

East plays the seven, and West switches surprisingly to the queen of clubs. What should I make of that?

What it seems to me is that West wants me to see 6 high card points outside of trumps, so that I won't have a reason to play him for the queen of hearts. It would seem like a dangerous play unless he is expecting, or at least hoping, for a trump trick. This view of the cards also accords with East's reluctance to let me play six hearts. It doesn't have to be, and as West is a strong player I may have been double-crossed, but after winning the club I cash the ace of hearts and run the jack. When East doesn't follow, I claim, the full deal being:

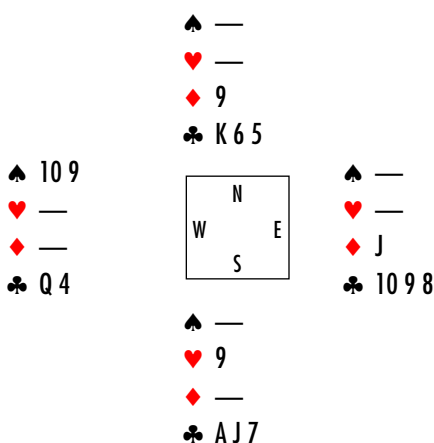
	♠ Q 4	
	♥ K 8 7 3	
	♦ K Q 9 4	
	♣ K 6 5	
♠ A 10 9 8 6 2		♠ J 7 3
♥ Q 6 2		♥ 5
♦ 10 2		♦ J 7 6 5 3
♣ Q 4		♣ 10 9 8 2
	♠ K 5	
	♥ A J 10 9 4	
	♦ A 8	
	♣ A J 7 3	

You may think that was a little transparent of West, but he was a bit unlucky that I held the jack of clubs. He may also have felt that his

partner's hesitation had tipped me off, and he may have been looking to tip the balance the other way.

How would you play if the defense had continued spades at Trick 2?

There is a case for playing exactly the same way. East is likely to have some shortness somewhere, and his pause over six hearts suggests it might be trumps. Furthermore, if West has length in trumps, there is a good chance East can be squeezed, whereas if you play East for Qxx in trumps, you still have a twelfth trick to find. So draw trumps, playing West for Qxx. Cash three rounds of diamonds and come to hand on a trump, coming to the following position:



On the last trump, East has to release a club to keep the jack of diamonds. Now play the king of clubs and a club to the ace, and when it turns out that West had six spades (there was a time when people did, regularly), the slam is made.



A NEW WORD

We are in Biarritz, France, playing in the 1982 World Championship Rosenblum Teams. We say hello. Our opponents nod, but do not answer; it appears we have no language in common. As South, I hold the following uninteresting collection:

♠ J 4 2 ♥ Q 10 9 3 ♦ J 4 ♣ 10 7 6 3

Only our side is vulnerable, and East, the dealer on my right, opens **one diamond**. I pass, and my left-hand opponent bids **one heart**. Partner gives this a moment's thought. I feel that action may not be in our best interests, so I mentally send instructions to pass. This seems to work, as partner puts out a green card. East rebids **one notrump** and, after my pass, West takes out to **two diamonds**. This is not alerted, and partner starts to think again, this time emerging with a red card. East's eyes light up, and he produces a blue card. I think partner will take a pass here as showing willingness to play two diamonds redoubled. Perhaps I should bid two hearts, but I decide on a prompt, unafraid, **three clubs**. This leads to a prompt, unafraid red card on my right, after two passes. This ends the auction, which has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		1♦	pass
1♥	pass	1NT	pass
2♦	dbl	redbl	3♣
pass	pass	dbl	all pass

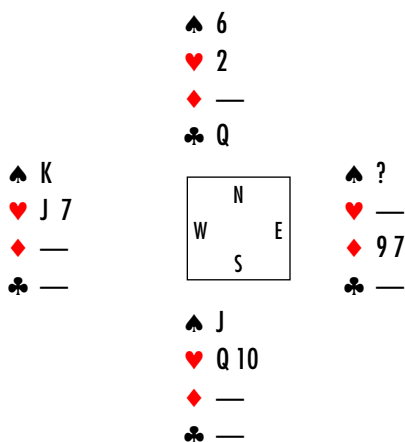
West leads the diamond two, and I try to muster up some enthusiasm.

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

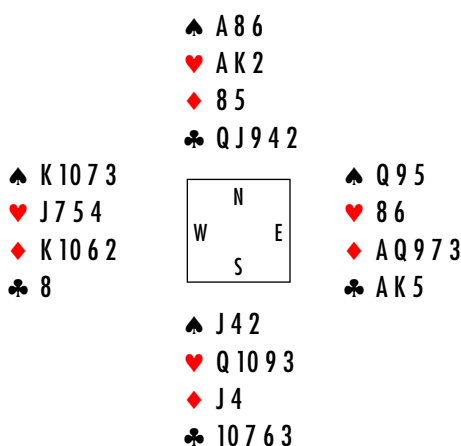
Now I wish partner had done his bidding on the first round after all. Here it looks like the defense should be able to collect two tricks each in spades, diamonds and clubs, for a penalty of 500. That would be a loss even if our teammates were to stretch to three notrump and make it, avoiding four heart losers and not losing a trick to the jack of spades. I check the range of our opponents' one notrump opening: it is 16-18.

East takes the opening lead with the queen, cashes the ace, and proceeds to play king, ace and another trump. West follows once with the eight, and then throws the ten and king of diamonds.

Not having anything obvious to do, I advance the eight of spades from the table, and duck when East covers with the nine, West following with the seven. East continues with the spade queen, and I win the ace as West follows with the three. I realize now that I have missed a chance while bemoaning partner's bidding. West must have the jack of hearts, as East has shown 15 high card points. If I had unblocked dummy's clubs, I would have had two trump entries, enough to pick up the hearts. Too late for that. I play a fourth trump, East discarding a diamond and West the ten of spades. We are now at the following position:



I play the last trump, East throwing a diamond, while I release the jack of spades and West the king. Now I have to ask myself: Is my six of spades high? I think so. I run through the play again. Sometimes when I think a spot is high, I realize it is, except for maybe the ace or king. No, it seems to be high. If I'm wrong, East will claim and I will lose my queen of hearts. I play the spade six, East follows impotently with the five, and I make the last trick with the queen of hearts. One down, not bad at all! West roars at his partner, a single word, what my high school French teacher used to call a "recognizable cognate". Here is the full deal:



I had no great plan when I led the eight of spades from the table. It is remarkable the things that happen. I suppose East's defense was idiotic, to use his partner's designation. The nine of spades served no purpose, nor did the queen. If East had held the king of spades, rather than the queen, an unblock might have been necessary, to avoid being thrown in to give a ruff-sluff when partner held the queen of hearts.

GRAND COMPLEXITY

Playing rubber bridge for money, both sides vulnerable, I pick up the following strong three-suiter:

♠ A Q 10 4 ♥ A ♦ A K 5 2 ♣ A Q 10 6

There are different schools of thought on hands like this. Some players fear missing a game if they open at the one-level, and since the hand doesn't have a suit long enough for a two-bid, they would treat it as balanced. In the methods of this club, that would mean opening two clubs and rebidding two notrump. I prefer to open at the one-level and make a start at showing all my suits. The suit under the singleton is the traditional choice, although one club, leaving room for a response of one diamond, has appeal, too. However, hearts is the likeliest response, so I start my suits in what I perceive to be the conventional order, with **one diamond**. If the bidding dies here, it won't necessarily be wrong for us. The next hand passes, and partner responds **one heart**. Another pass, and now I continue my plan, forcing to game with **two spades**. Partner now gives preference to **three diamonds**.

I consider it normal for opener's third bid in sequences like this to be natural, and I continue with **four clubs**. I should have a huge hand for this, because with four clubs and just a minimum game force I would rebid three notrump. We are in uncharted territory, now. Partner repeats his diamond support, with **four diamonds**. I would like to bid a natural four notrump here, but I'm not sure how partner will take it. I decide to jump to **five notrump**. No doubt he will be mystified by that, too. He seems to take it at face value, though, and after a little while raises me to **seven notrump**. Well, I hope the play will be a little less painful than the bidding, which was:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	1♥	pass	2♠
pass	3♦	pass	4♣
pass	4♦	pass	5NT
pass	7NT	all pass	

West leads the ten of hearts, and I see partner had a difficult hand to bid as well:

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

We are certainly in the best contract. There are twelve top tricks, and each one of South's three suits might provide the thirteenth. With no luck there, I can look for a squeeze. With menaces in all four suits, there are numerous possibilities. In fact, it strikes me that if I could see all the cards, I would almost always make seven notrump. Not quite always — not if, for example, East guards hearts and West everything else.

The strategy here will be to keep options open as long as possible. It is going to be complex to evaluate all the squeeze chances. I think my first job is not to go down when one of my suits splits favorably. At the point that I cash the king and queen of hearts, I will need to find two discards, so my plan will be to test two suits prior to that, playing three rounds of each. To keep squeeze chances alive, I will keep the entry in one suit intact. With nothing else to go on, that may as well be one of the suits with a ten, leaving the option of a finesse in the endgame.

Having sorted this out as well as I am able, I win the first four tricks with aces, claim one hundred and fifty honors, and cash the king of

spades. Everyone has followed, but when I cash the king of clubs, East discards a heart. Can I afford to cash the queen of clubs now? The only use for the queen of clubs is a link for a heart-club squeeze against West. But if West has four hearts, he can't guard spades or diamonds, so either one of them will split or East can be squeezed. So I come to the queen of clubs, East throwing another heart. The position is now:

♠	6
♥	K Q 5
♦	Q 7
♣	—
♠	Q 10
♥	—
♦	K 5 2
♣	10

The question now is whether to cash one of the winners in hand before crossing to the queen of diamonds. That feels like normal technique, avoiding any ambiguity when East guards both diamonds and spades. That is not the issue here, though. I cannot go wrong if East started with four cards in both spades and diamonds — he will then have started with only four hearts, and his discard on the last heart winner will tell all. If he started with five hearts, then dummy's last heart is already good. A little reflection shows that there is a problem only if he started with exactly six hearts, with his diamonds and spades divided 4-2. If his pattern was 2-6-4-1, I must cash the queen of spades now, to squeeze East in diamonds and hearts. If his pattern was 4-6-2-1, I am best off cashing the king of diamonds, so I will know what to pitch on the last heart winner. So this is the moment of truth. I am going to cash a winner, and if East started with 4-6-2-1 or 2-6-4-1, choosing the wrong one will be fatal. I can't see much either way, and after a little soul-searching I cash the king of diamonds, to which all follow, and play a diamond to the queen, East discarding a heart. All then follow to the king of hearts, and on the queen East succumbs. He pitches a spade, and I make the last two tricks with the queen and ten. The full deal was:

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

In 1979, I became a regular for a while in the money rubber game at the St. Clair Bridge Club, in Toronto. Since the object was to improve, I played in the best game, which meant Sami Kehela's. I didn't make any money. The North-South hands are from those days. I wrote them down in my daybook, with a note that they were complex. Indeed. I was intending to analyze them later, and am just getting around to it now. Hands with menaces in all four suits are very complex. On the North-South cards, there are simple squeezes possible in each pair of suits, and triple squeezes possible in each threesome, some against either opponent. On this layout, declarer could have played differently after East showed out on the second club, cashing the spade and diamond winners ending in dummy. That would squeeze West in hearts and clubs, an unusual position in that the entryless heart suit threatened both defenders. This line would fail, though, if East was either 2-6-4-1 or 4-6-2-1, and is therefore inferior to the line taken.



NEAR SYMMETRY

Playing for money, I am gratified to hold

♠ A K J ♥ Q J 8 5 4 ♦ K J ♣ A 10 4

I open **one heart**, and with the opponents understandably silent, partner bids **two diamonds**. I bid **three notrump**, which I hope shows more than a strong notrump opening. Partner raises to **six notrump**, and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♥
pass	2♦	pass	3NT
pass	6NT	all pass	

West leads the seven of spades, and I see that partner is full value for his raise to six:

♠ 7

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

Thirty-four high card points, two five-card suits, and a couple of tens, and yet it seems there is a lot to be done before collecting the money. I need to start with a play in hearts or diamonds, and each suit offers alternative ways to play. If I choose to play diamonds first, I will play low

to the jack, which picks up the entire suit when East has doubleton or third queen.

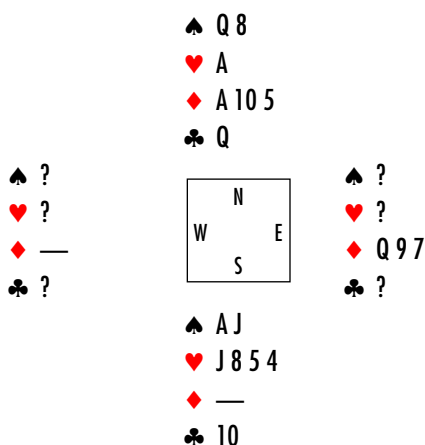
However, I see two advantages to playing hearts first. If I can score a second heart trick without losing one, I can switch to diamonds, not minding losing to the queen so long as diamonds are 4-2 or 3-3. And if I do lose a trick to the king of hearts, a 3-3 heart split would see me home without any diamond play.

So how should I play the hearts? If West has the king, I can lead the queen through him. Whether he covers or not, I can follow with a diamond to the jack. If I play East for the king of hearts, I won't release the ace on the first round — it must be better to play the low heart away from the ace. Then, if he steps in with the king, I won't need a diamond finesse unless the hearts split 5-1. If he ducks, I can switch to diamonds.

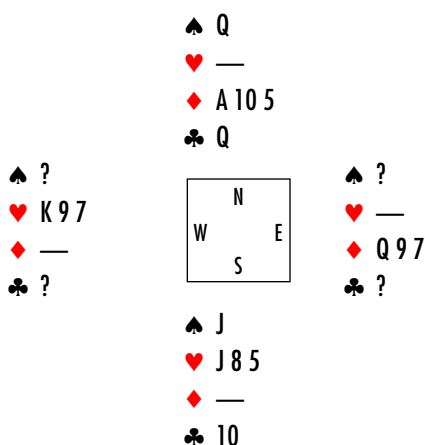
If I had any sort of clue where the king of hearts is, I would play accordingly. Here, though, I see no clue, and the heart suit looks nearly symmetric. I note one difference, though, in the two lines. If I play East for the heart king, I am hoping for no 5-1 split, whereas if I play through West successfully, I have no such need.

Perhaps I can play off a black winner or two, and if I get a showout, then play hearts accordingly. I want to be *very* careful about that, though, since it looks like I may need plenty of entries to sort out the red suits. If I run the queen of hearts successfully, I will want to cross on a black entry and play a diamond to the jack. If that were to win, I would unblock the king of diamonds, cross on another black entry, and establish my long diamond. If the queen of hearts loses, I need to win the return, unblock the ace of hearts, cross to hand, and try the jack of hearts. If they don't split, I need the best play for four diamond tricks, which means crossing to dummy twice. That means I can cash at most one club.

Hoping I am not doing something very foolish, I win the king of spades in hand, East playing the deuce, and cash the ace of clubs. Nobody shows out, so I lead the queen of hearts. That holds the trick, East playing the ten. Interesting! I'll have to add ten-nine doubleton to the list of things to think about. I cross to a club, and play a diamond to the jack, which holds. When I cash the king of diamonds, though, West discards the three of spades. The position is now:



My plan now is to strip the East hand of everything but diamonds, and then exit with dummy's five. It looks like the next step is to cash the ace of hearts. If East started with the ten-nine of hearts doubleton, I can come to my hand in spades and concede the king of hearts. If it turns out that East has three hearts — well, I don't want to think about that. When I cash the ace of hearts, though, East shows out, as expected, pitching the ten of spades. I play off the ace of spades, West playing the four and East the nine, and confront this five-card ending:



East has two remaining black cards. If he has one of each, I can cash my queens in either order. If he is now void in a black suit, I must play that

suit next. That will force him to either release a diamond, whereupon I can play ace and another, or come down to one black card, which I can remove before endplaying him in diamonds. What I must not do is establish a black winner for him. The clues seem to point to playing the queen of spades next. If East started with five and has false-carded well, I will go down. From a purely mathematical point of view, his black cards are more likely divided 4-3 than 5-2, and if that is the case, a spade will be safe. I lead a spade to the queen, and when East shrugs, I know I have made my contract. He pitches a club, so I cash the queen of clubs, and exit with dummy's small diamond, scoring the ace and ten at the end. The full deal was:

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

This is another deal from the St. Clair. I noted the North-South hands in my 1979 daybook. The East-West cards, and the narrative, are fictional.



ONE OF TWO

Playing in a world team event, I am the dealer, with only the opponents vulnerable, and I hold as South:

♠ Q J 9 ♥ A 10 9 3 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 3 2

I open **one notrump**, 15-17. After a pass, partner bids **two clubs**, Stayman. East enters with a **double**. Our methods call for bidding a four-card major here, regardless of the club holding, so I bid **two hearts**. Partner now jumps to **four clubs**. I take this as a splinter raise, at least four hearts and short in clubs. I have a minimum, but with good trump texture and no useless club honors, I feel justified in cuebidding **four diamonds**. This produces **four notrump** from partner, Roman Keycard Blackwood. With three keycards, I bid **five clubs**, and partner concludes with **six hearts**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1NT
pass	2♣	dbl	2♥
pass	4♣	pass	4♦
pass	4NT	pass	5♣
pass	6♥	all pass	

West leads the diamond queen, and I have a look at:

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

Clearly the main task is to hold the trump losers to one. Then I will have three trump tricks, likely five spades, two diamonds and a club, for eleven. One club ruff will bring me to twelve. There is no rush about that, though. I will think about where to win the first trick once I make up my mind how I should play the trumps. I see three plausible approaches, all of which roughly entail winning one of two finesses. I can lead the queen from dummy, later finessing the ten if the queen runs to the king. A second approach is low from dummy to the ten, with running the queen in reserve should the ten lose to the jack. A third try is low from hand to the queen, with a heart to the ten in reserve if the queen loses to the king. All three of these lines hold trump losers to one if one of two cards is right and trumps break 3-2. They differ in how well they handle 4-1 splits, and how well they avoid an adverse ruff. Spades might be 5-0 either way, although East probably would have doubled six hearts holding a spade void. West may well have long diamonds, and if he makes an early trump trick, he may be able to give East a ruff there.

Leading the queen loses immediately to a singleton king on the right, or singleton small, doing fine against singleton jack. If there are four cards on the right, leading the queen does well if it pins the stiff jack. If it loses to the singleton king, the trumps can still be picked up, so long as spades are 3-2 or there is a singleton ten; otherwise there are entry troubles. If there is KJxx on the right, leading the queen is not so good, assuming East covers. Unaware of the split, I will win the ace and it will be very hard to avoid losing a club, or diamond, or second trump.

Leading low to the ten does better against KJxx on the right. Assuming East plays low, I can follow with a low trump to the queen and

king, and later ruff a club to dummy to finesse the jack. If the ten loses to a singleton jack, I'm down; against a singleton jack on the right, I may be able to manage things if West has three clubs: win the first trick in dummy with the king of diamonds, play a trump to the jack and ace, trump to the queen getting the showout, ace of clubs, club ruff, queen of spades, club ruff, jack of spades, heart ten. That would work if West was 2-4-4-3. If he had a third spade, he could cut me off from the long spades by leading it.

That leaves my third plan, a low trump to the queen. That works well against a singleton honor on the left, or singleton jack on the right. It seems to work well against king-jack fourth on the right. I think I like this one the best. I notice now that I didn't consider playing ace and another, which surely isn't right, or running the nine from hand. This last play is an attempt to bend the odds: it is playing for the jack on the left, or the king on the right, with the extra chance that West might solve declarer's problem by going in with the king. That's not such a bad idea, but the extra chance is unlikely to materialize at this level, and I can't afford to waste a spot if East has king-jack fourth.

After all this, I win the opening lead in hand and lead a heart to the queen, which holds. That may mean that West started with king-jack fourth, in which case I will go down. When I lead a second trump from dummy, though, East follows with the eight. Apparently there is more to think about! It looks like West started with king-jack third. In that case, it doesn't matter what I do. My play makes a difference only if East has made an enterprising duck from king-jack fourth, or if West has a bare honor left and can give East a diamond ruff. Let's see — if West started with king and one heart and six diamonds, surely he might have just hopped up with the king and played a second diamond. As to whether East might have ducked king third or king-jack fourth, either seems possible, but if I play low I will survive losing to the jack if East cannot ruff a diamond, so that seems best. I put in the ten, and West shows out. Well played by the defense, but after I lead the queen of spades to see that no one is void, I claim. The full deal was:

	♠ A K 8 3 2 ♥ Q 5 4 2 ♦ K 5 2 ♣ 6										
♠ 10 7 4 ♥ 6 ♦ Q J 10 7 6 3 ♣ K 7 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 80px; height: 80px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 5 ♥ K J 8 7 ♦ 9 ♣ Q J 10 9 8 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
	♠ Q J 9 ♥ A 10 9 3 ♦ A 8 4 ♣ A 3 2										

There is another point of interest about how well the three lines pick up trumps when they split 3-2. They all depend on one of two cards being right, but there is a subtle distinction. The first two lines work if the same opponent, East, has the king or jack. The third line, low to the queen, works if West has the king or East the jack, and that isn't quite as likely. Let's count cases. There are twenty 3-2 splits. Low to the queen works against the ten cases where West has the king, and also when East has KJ8, KJ7, KJ6, KJ, for fourteen out of twenty. The other lines work sixteen out of twenty times, losing only to East holdings of 87, 86, 76, 876. We tend to think of "one out of two" as 75%, but that is only approximate.

To take another case, suppose you as declarer are missing the ace and king of spades. Ignoring bidding inferences, what are the odds, before the lead, that West has the ace and king? It is 50% that West has the ace, and if he does, there are 12 remaining places out of 25 for him to hold the king, so the odds of his having both are $1/2 \times 12/25$, or 24%. The odds that either opponent holds at least one are $100 - 24 = 76\%$. This slight discrepancy from 75% is magnified when we consider smaller groups of cards. If a suit is known to be 3-2, then the odds that a given hand will hold at least one of two given cards in that suit is 80%.

The deal arose in the 2004 Venice Cup final in Istanbul, Russia vs. the United States. The real life declarer, Tobi Sokolow for the Americans, successfully led low to the ten. An interesting sidelight to this is to consider what happens if East inserts the jack. Now if declarer wins the ace, she goes down. The long trumps headed by a winner

are too powerful: East can duck a second round of trumps, and if declarer plays a third, East can play a fourth, leaving declarer a trick short. If declarer tries ruffing a club, East can force in clubs after coming in on the third round. So if East finds the play of the jack on the first round of trumps, a play that is to me unintuitive (perhaps we hope declarer is going to play the ace), declarer can succeed only by playing low and later finessing for the king. That is a conceivable line of play, since it is so difficult to make the hand if East has a singleton jack. And that leads to a further remarkable point. What if East found the play of the jack from jack and one, or even jack third!



MONASTIC MISCHIEF

Partner is the dealer at game all in a tough rubber bridge game. I hold

♠ A K 3 ♥ 9 7 5 ♦ 8 6 4 2 ♣ 8 5 2

Partner opens **one club**. Next hand passes. One diamond is the positional choice, but other things being equal or nearly so, I prefer to declare, so I bid **one notrump**. Partner raises to **two notrump**, and without irrefutable justification, I go on to **three notrump**. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
	1♣	pass	1NT
pass	2NT	pass	3NT
all pass			

West leads the queen of spades, and I consider the dummy:

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

Good luck in hearts or clubs will see us home, so it doesn't look right to create entry difficulties by ducking. I win with the king and play a club

East is a crafty customer, though, and if he has the king lurking behind the nine of clubs, this line would lose the chance to take a heart finesse. I see two plausible alternatives. I can return to the ace of spades and lead my other low club, preserving the eight, finessing if West follows low. If clubs are 3-2 onside, I've made it. If the finesse loses to the king, East having ducked the first round, I will be able to return to the eight and try the heart finesse. The other alternative is to give up on king third or fourth of clubs onside, and simply cash the ace. I make if the king falls, and it could fall from either side. Failing that, I can set up the clubs, and later try the heart finesse.

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

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The real-life declarer (assuming the accounts are factual) was the Abbot¹, who fell for Brother Paulo's deceptive nine, by returning to hand in spades to run the eight of clubs. This seems like a low-percentage play against someone of the caliber of Brother Paulo, who picked his spot well. I wonder how he would have defended against a stronger player, such as Brother Lucius. The play of the nine risks turning the eight into a third-round entry when declarer chooses the line of returning to hand to lead the second low club. It also risks setting up the seven as an entry for declarer, when partner has doubleton eight.

1. Readers unfamiliar with the monks of St. Titus would be well advised to acquire one or more of the series, such as *Miracles of Card Play* by Terence Reese and David Bird.



ANOTHER STRING

Our opponents in a team-of-four match are strong players who use old-fashioned carding methods. With no one vulnerable, East on my right passes and I survey a strong collection:

♠ K Q 7 5 ♥ A K J ♦ A 3 2 ♣ A K 5

This is too strong for 2NT in our methods, so I begin with **two clubs**. Partner replies **two diamonds**, waiting, and I rebid **two notrump** as planned. Partner raises to **three notrump** and all pass. The bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
		pass	2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

West leads the six of clubs, and I see dummy has little to spare:

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

How am I going to make this? There is no clear route to one notrump, let alone three. Four diamond tricks would be a good start. I can manage that if either opponent has a doubleton king, if I play for it. I can

also take four tricks against a singleton king on my right, by ducking completely either before or after cashing the ace. Are there any other chances? Perhaps I could induce a defensive error. Suppose I lead low to the queen, and East has king third. That will set him a problem. He may suspect me of trying to steal a trick with a doubleton ace or two small. If he takes his king, his partner's jack will fall on the second round and I will have four tricks. This ruse would be quite likely to work, because East would have a hard time believing that I would give up my legitimate play. It is an interesting idea, and I might consider it if I were desperate for a swing. But that isn't the case, and I have no reason to avoid the legitimate play.

A doubleton king of diamonds is the main chance, but perhaps I can have another string for my bow. Suppose West has the king and jack of diamonds, third or fourth. He will have to play low when I play a diamond up, and perhaps he can be endplayed later. I will need an exit card for what I have in mind, so I take East's nine of clubs with the king. I then cash the ace of hearts and lead the two of diamonds. West plays the six, dummy the ten, and East the eight. Now it's very unlikely the king of diamonds is doubleton, so I need to try to develop an endplay. This will be my last time in dummy, so I lead a heart to the jack, which holds.

Judging from East's nine of clubs at Trick 1, it would seem that West's clubs are headed by the queen and jack, and he is likely to have five. He could have four diamonds, but three is more likely; in that case he is likely to be 3-2 in the majors. If he has three hearts there is no hurry to cash the third round, but if he has three spades to the ace, I think I need to put him under pressure. I play off the king of hearts, and it is clear that West is in difficulty. He releases a spade, and I now play the king of spades to his ace. He returns the queen of clubs. Hoping I have read the cards correctly, I win this, cash the spade queen, and exit with my low club. West takes his clubs, but has to play from the diamond king at the end. I have lost just three clubs and a spade. The full deal was:

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

There was no defense; if West throws a club on the third round of hearts, declarer can exit in clubs. West can then underlead the ace of spades, but is simply thrown in on a diamond to concede another spade.

Declarer's play must be precisely timed to succeed. Here is the position after the winning heart finesse:

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

It is not good enough to play the king of spades here. That allows West to win the ace and set up his clubs. If declarer then plays the king of hearts, West can release a club, keeping spades for communication with partner. The play of the king of hearts forces him to commit himself prematurely.

At the table, as reported in the *Toronto Star*, declarer was defeated taking the more prosaic line of ducking the first club and then playing ace and another diamond. That would have secured the contract if diamonds played for four tricks, unless one hand had five clubs and both entries. I must confess that the line I had my declarer take, while imaginative and instructive, has a bit of a double-dummy air about it. It might have been best under slightly different circumstances, say if South's jack of hearts had been the queen so that no heart finesse was needed.

TROUBLE FOR NOTHING

Playing against world-class opponents in a middle round of the Vanderbilt Cup, the North American premier spring knockout, I hold as South

♠ 7 ♥ A K Q 10 4 ♦ 6 ♣ A K Q 7 4 2

I am the dealer, vulnerable against not. We are playing a strong club system, so I open **one club**. West passes, and partner bids a natural, game-forcing **two diamonds**. East, on my right, comes in with **two spades**. I see no reason not to simply bid my longer suit: **three clubs**. After a pass from West, partner rebids **three diamonds**. The opponents have apparently had their say, as East passes. I can conveniently show my second suit: **three hearts**. Partner now gives preference to **four clubs**. That fills in my hand nicely. While we could certainly lose a club or a heart, the only obvious losers are the singletons and I ask for aces with **four notrump**. Partner shows two with **five hearts**, and since I may want to ruff a heart in dummy, I bid **seven clubs**. That makes the bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♣
pass	2♦	2♠	3♣
pass	3♦	pass	3♥
pass	4♣	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	7♣
all pass			

West leads the ten of spades, and I see we will need a bit of luck:

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

For starters, we need a 3-2 break in trumps. Assuming that, there are twelve top tricks. The obvious candidate for a thirteenth is a heart ruff in dummy. That will succeed unless East can overruff. I wish dummy's spot were a little higher! If East is short in hearts, he can overruff unless he was dealt a singleton five of trumps, which is of no use to me.

Another idea is to take a ruffing finesse in spades at Trick 2. That will fail if East has seven spades, but I really don't think that is likely. With seven spades to the king and favorable vulnerability, and an opponent who has opened a strong club and has not been able to show his suit yet, I think East would bid three spades. (The deal occurred in the carefree days before the scoring table change: doubled non-vulnerable penalties were 100, 300, 500, 700, 900...) It's hard to know, though. A spectacular way for that line to fail would be to find that my left-hand opponent had underled doubleton king. That is a real possibility; against a grand slam there is no need to lead the king, and six small spades might be reason enough for East to overcall.

Something else occurs to me. If East has six or seven spades, two or three clubs, and two or more hearts, he is unlikely to hold the guarded queen of diamonds. Perhaps I can play this as a funny sort of double squeeze, with hearts as the central suit. I try to check my calculations. This has taken a long time, and the pressure is getting to me: I think I'm starting to hyperventilate. I see that if East does in fact hold a hand like

♠ K 8 7 6 5 2 ♥ 8 5 ♦ Q 9 3 ♣ 9 5

playing for the squeeze may leave me a trick short and looking rather foolish: nothing new there. However, I like this line the best. I win the ace of spades and start to draw trumps. Fortunately, all follow to two

rounds, and I play all the trumps, discarding three diamonds and a spade from dummy. West follows to three trumps, and pitches a spade, a diamond, and a heart. East throws four spades. The position is now:

♠ Q J
 ♥ 6
 ♦ A K J
 ♣ —

 ♠ —
 ♥ A K Q 10 4
 ♦ 6
 ♣ —

Following my plan, I cash the top two diamonds, everyone following, and then play hearts from the top. All is well, the full deal being:

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

East¹ gives me a puzzled look; I think he's wondering why I thought for twenty minutes instead of ruffing a heart and claiming. As it happens, the three lines I considered would all have worked, as would drawing trumps and testing the hearts, with a diamond finesse in reserve. It was a lot of trouble for nothing.

1. East was Chip Martel, West Lew Stansby. The spots and East-West hands are approximate.

KEEP THINKING

Playing in the old Moreheads (today's Grand National Teams), I pick up one of the strangest hands I have ever held:

♠ — ♥ A Q J 9 7 5 2 ♦ — ♣ A Q J 9 6 3

We are vulnerable, and the opponents are not, and I am first to speak. I have no idea what to do. With the intent of making it difficult for the opponents to find a good save in spades, I open **six hearts**. After confirming that I am not joking, West says **double**, and everyone passes. The short bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
dbl	all pass		6♥

West leads the king of diamonds, and I await dummy with considerable trepidation.

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

Good clubs! I ruff the opening lead, and think for a moment. Can it ever be right to try to cross in clubs to play hearts from the table? I don't see how, unless I was planning to play East for K10xx, which I certainly am not. It looks like I will make it unless I lose two trumps, or the king

of trumps and a club ruff. I play the ace of hearts, all following, and continue with the jack. West takes that with the king, as East finishes a high-low. *That's because he can ruff a club*, the voice inside my head screams. Fortunately, West is intent on trying his other ace, and we score up +1660. The full deal was:

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

This deal was many years ago, and my recollection of the deal is a little fuzzy. I was young, and had no idea how to handle such a freak, not that I know now. What struck me later, though, was that this is actually a card play problem. Have you given it any thought? I think of this deal from time to time, whenever I need to be reminded that bridge is an amazing game, unforgiving and requiring continual vigilance. What did you discard on the second trump? I can't recall giving it a passing thought at the time. The correct discard is a spade.

Here's why. The only danger, after West wins the king of hearts, is that East can trump a club. Perhaps his high-low should have promised a void, but maybe it just showed three trumps, or more likely the partnership had no firm agreement. In any event, declarer's job is to give the defense a reason not to play a club. One reason is that otherwise a spade can be discarded from the closed hand. From West's point of view, if a discard is available on dummy's clubs, there will still be a spade to cash afterwards, assuming partner has a third trump for his high-low. At most declarer will have six trump tricks and five clubs. The possibility that you need to preserve for West is that the South hand is something like

♠ 6 ♥ A Q J 9 7 5 2 ♦ — ♣ A Q 9 6 3

Now, on a club switch, declarer ruffs three more diamonds in hand, setting up the fifth when they are 4-4. There are just enough trumps and club entries to accomplish this remarkable feat.

Now, you might complain that this isn't a six heart opening. But neither is the one I actually had, and who is to say what a normal six heart opening is? The point is that it costs absolutely nothing to leave open this possibility to the defender, and it could make the difference between victory and defeat.

Making six hearts doubled was very exciting, but of course we missed the very good seven clubs. I feel my opening was somewhat vindicated by the fact that the opponents missed a very good save. Sy Bramson, my counterpart at another table, opened the South hand with a Roman two hearts, 12-16 with hearts and clubs. A true description, if not exactly what Belladonna and Avarelli had in mind. After a double, Irving Litvack jumped to four clubs, showing good clubs and short hearts, whereupon Sy promptly bid the cold grand slam.

COMPLEX CROSSRUFF

Playing in a tough team-of-four match, I pick up as dealer a strong three-suiter:

♠ A 9 4 2 ♥ K Q 7 2 ♦ A K 8 2 ♣ A

Only the opponents are vulnerable. My usual opening with this pattern is one heart, but I have agreed to play five-card majors, so my opening is **one diamond**. The next hand passes, and partner produces a seldom-heard bid: **four diamonds**. The next hand passes, and I have to give this some thought. Partner must have considerable length in diamonds, and he must be concerned that the opponents can make something. My hand is very strong, and we are likely to make a slam if partner has a singleton spade. I could try to locate that, or perhaps I should just try not to help the opponents lead effectively. I decide to bid a direct **six diamonds**. That concludes the bidding, which has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			1♦
pass	4♦	pass	6♦
all pass			

West leads the king of spades, and partner gives me a very suitable dummy, perhaps better than I deserve:

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

The first idea that comes to mind is to set up the clubs. If they split favorably, either 3-3 or with a doubleton king, we will need two ruffs in hand, and so three entries to table (two to ruff clubs, and one to cash them). Let's try it with a 4-0 trump split. Ace of clubs, low trump to dummy discovering the split. Now if we ruff a club low, dummy will be short an entry, and if we ruff both clubs high we create a trump loser. But if trumps are 3-1 or better, we are fine. Now consider a less favorable club lie, fourth king. Now we need to ruff three clubs in hand, and we need four entries to table. One entry can be in the trump suit, if we use the ace and king for ruffing. The other three dummy entries must be ruffs, which means trumps must divide 2-2 if we are to keep control. If we are going to take three ruffs on table, we should ruff hearts as well as spades, to minimize the danger of an overruff. The sequence could be: ace of clubs, heart conceded, trump shift won on table. Now ruff three clubs in hand, returning to dummy each time with a major-suit ruff, draw trumps with dummy's remaining honor, cash the two long clubs. Note that no heart trick is needed, and stopping off to cash a heart simply increases the risk of getting overruffed.

Can I make twelve tricks on a crossruff? If I take one heart trick in addition to the two black aces, I will need nine trump tricks. One problem will be scoring the small trumps in hand without getting overruffed. The other problem is that when I concede a heart, the defense can shift to a trump, costing me one ruffing trick. It would be better if I could lead a heart through East's ace. Then if he goes in with the ace to play a trump, I score an extra heart trick.

This may be the kind of hand where one sets out one way, willing to change tack according to circumstances. I win the ace of spades and

cash the ace of clubs. Now I take a spade ruff in dummy in order to play a second club. I plan to ruff this with the eight, and if that passes off successfully, concede the ace of hearts and go about setting up dummy.

East discards a spade! That's not good, but I'm certainly glad I didn't play a heart early. I ruff the club and play a third spade. It's unlikely to matter, but I ruff high, as East follows, leading to this position:

♠ —
 ♥ 6
 ♦ Q J 5
 ♣ Q 9 7 5

 ♠ 9
 ♥ K Q 7 2
 ♦ A K 8
 ♣ —

I now lead the singleton heart from dummy. East plays low, but with no alternative I put up the king, which wins. I'm home now; dummy's little trump will score on a heart, and the eight of trumps on a club, and I can then claim on a high crossruff. The defense gets Trick 13. The full deal was:

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

East's duck of the heart ace was courageous, but misguided. He should figure that if I have five trumps, or king-queen-jack in hearts, there is no defense. If I have 4-4-4-1 with king-jack of hearts, it is sufficient to fly in with the ace of hearts and play a trump. If instead he plays low, I will probably put up the king from king-jack, since even if the jack were to force the ace, a trump return would leave me a trick short.

The main point of the hand, preserving the option of leading towards the hearts, was not difficult, but the details certainly were. I was very close to leading the king of hearts at Trick 3, to secure communications. That would have been one down. The defense had no chance after failing to lead a trump. West might have done so, had he considered that if North has a two-suiter, the second suit will be clubs.

The East-West cards have been altered to support the suggested line of play. The deal actually arose in an instructional game with my wife and in-laws. I thought I would demonstrate advanced entry management by ruffing clubs high, saving the low trumps for getting back to dummy. Unfortunately West had a doubleton club and the doubleton nine of diamonds, and I impressed no one when I belatedly ruffed the fourth round of clubs with the eight and got overruffed.



OPTIONS...

Playing IMPs with a familiar partner against old rivals, I pick up

♠ A 10 8 6 5 ♥ 10 8 7 ♦ K 10 6 ♣ 10 4

Dealer on my left passes, and partner opens **one diamond**, which is a limited bid in our system and could be short. The next hand bids **three clubs**, which is weak in principle, but could be a wide range of things opposite a passed hand. I choose to pass, and no one else has anything to say, so the bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	1♦	3♣	all pass

The low diamond looks best to me, and dummy comes down with:

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

	N	
W		E
	S	

Partner wins the ace and returns the four, declarer playing the five and eight. In our methods, partner's return shows a four-card suit. He seems to have a balanced hand, which means he will have at least a good 12 high card points, and he would have preferred one of a major on a suit that was as good as Axxx or KJxx. I consider my defense. Declarer is marked with a third diamond, so if I want, I can win the ten and cash the king, leaving myself on play. If I badly want partner on play after three rounds of diamonds, perhaps I can win the king instead, and play

the ten to partner's queen. Surely declarer would have played the queen if he had it, but it would be disastrous to be wrong about that. The ace of spades is our fourth trick, since declarer is marked with at least one spade. For a fifth trick, partner could have the ace of hearts, or the king of spades doubleton, or an unlikely trump trick. There is the potential for a trump promotion if partner has honor third, or two honors doubleton. If that is not complication enough, I can think about trying for a sixth trick, for two down. Ace-jack third of hearts might give us that, but not if we first set up dummy's spade queen.

If I win the second diamond cheaply and cash the third, partner should give me a suit-preference signal. If he indicates hearts, I will assume he has the ace. That will mean he has just three hearts, making declarer 1-3-3-6. We will have five top tricks, and a sixth might come from a trump promotion, or from partner's jack of hearts. Unfortunately, I can see no way to cover all the possibilities. To benefit from a trump promotion, we have to cash whatever spades we can, first; otherwise declarer can simply pitch a spade on the fourth diamond. But if I cash the ace and declarer turns up with the singleton king and three small hearts, I have lost our second heart trick.

If partner signals spades on the third diamond, things are not so rosy. If we have two spade tricks, we should take them; if we have only one, we need to win it in partner's hand and play the fourth diamond. I will lead my fourth-best spade and hope partner can work out what to do. Third and low leads might be better here; perhaps partner will remind me of this later.

I wonder how clear it will be for partner to ask for a spade when holding just the king. After all, I could hold the jack and declarer ace-ten. Perhaps I should cash the ace of spades prior to the third diamond — no, that will leave partner without an entry if declarer has a singleton spade. I'm surprised partner didn't put in the queen of diamonds at Trick 1, to keep things more fluid.

I win the second trick with the ten of diamonds and cash the king, partner playing the nine and declarer the jack. Worn out by all my thinking, I misread the nine as a request for spades. As planned, I shift to a fourth-best spade. That is not good at all, as declarer has the singleton king. Fortunately, partner's jack of hearts is good enough for one down, as the full deal turns out to be:

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

Getting both a trump promotion and a third major-suit trick was not possible, but to lose both was a bit of a feat. As partner sympathized, the nine is quite a high card, just not higher than a queen. Oh dear.

It is difficult to keep the mind going methodically through a maze of defensive possibilities. Here, neither partner can tell that a trump promotion is available: it depends on partner's holding. And neither player can tell if the jack of hearts is a trick. In situations like this one, it is good to have habits. I like to first consider the evidence, getting an approximation of the likeliest hand for declarer. Then I try to think of what lines of defense may be possible, and how to preserve options. Then, when I understand the choices the defense has to make, and when I have thought about declarer's need for information, it is time to consider defensive signaling possibilities. Often this thinking has to be done at Trick 1, but sometimes it can be done later when more is known. On this hand, it was acceptable to think at Trick 2, because I knew my diamond holding would be revealed shortly.



IF THIS, THEN NOT THAT

Playing in a good team game, both sides are vulnerable as I pick up

♠ A Q 9 8 7 6 2 ♥ 5 3 ♦ J 10 5 4 ♣ —

The dealer on my right opens **two hearts**, weak. Three or four spades show better hands than this, so I settle for **two spades**. The next hand passes, and partner leaps to game with **four spades**. No one has anything to say to this, so the bidding has been

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♠	2♥ all pass	2♠

The opening lead is the ten of hearts:

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

I play low and East follows with the eight. West continues with the heart nine. I play the king from dummy, which East wins with the ace. Now comes the heart queen, which I ruff with the nine. West discards the club six, and I have to consider the play.

At first glance, the hand seems to need one of two finesses, or the queen of diamonds singleton. Is there any other play? East could have

a doubleton queen of diamonds, but I would need a reason to drop it. If I could establish the ten of clubs as a menace against West, he would not be able to keep a diamond guard in the endgame, whether he had one or not. Then I could play diamonds from the top. To play this way would require two entries to dummy to ruff clubs. One can be a top diamond, but the other top diamond is needed for the end position. The other entry will have to be in trumps, where I could establish an entry by leading low from hand.

That means giving up on the spade finesse. Can I afford to do that? East began with ace-queen-jack to six hearts. There is just room for the king of spades in addition, but surely not the queen of diamonds as well. East may have a point or so in clubs, as well, as West might have led a club from king-queen-jack.

This looks like the right idea. I play a low spade, and West wins the king and plays another, East following twice. I cash the ace of clubs, throwing a diamond, and lead a club, ruffing East's jack. Now jack of diamonds to the ace, and another club. East follows with the queen this time, and I ruff and play out the trumps. The position prior to the play of the last trump is:

♠	—
♥	—
♦	K 9
♣	10
♠	8
♥	—
♦	10 5
♣	—

East is apparently 2-6-2-3, so I am going to make this regardless of the position of the queen of diamonds. On my last trump, West has to keep the king of clubs, so he comes down to one diamond. I throw the ten of clubs from the dummy, and the remaining diamonds fall under the king. The full deal was:

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

This deal, with different East-West hands, appeared in the December 2004 *Bridge World*, sent in by Bill Townsend of Leeds, England.



A NEW LOOK

We are playing in a qualifying round for the national championship. West is a former partner of mine; his current partnership is a reliable one using old-fashioned methods. I am South, and pick up a good hand:

♠ A 6 ♥ A 5 4 3 ♦ A K Q 5 ♣ K J 6

Neither side is vulnerable, and I start things off with **two notrump**. With the opponents silent, partner raises to **three notrump**, concluding this brief auction:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	3NT	all pass	2NT

West leads the seven of clubs, and partner gives me a bit to work with:

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

My partner does not believe in looking for a major fit on a flat hand, especially when even nine tricks may be hard to come by. I don't disagree. Spades has to produce two more tricks than notrump to be worthwhile at IMPs, and that is surely unlikely. Apart from that,

Stayman on this hand would have disclosed to the defenders both my heart length and my lack of four spades.

Before playing from dummy, I should think about what may happen in clubs, for it may be important to play in tempo. For example, if East wins the ace and returns a low one, I may wish to go up with the king without disclosing the fact that I have a third club. Here, though, I think I would finesse, for several reasons. West may have led from top of nothing. Or, if he has led from fourth queen, finessing the jack may keep the defense from scoring the thirteenth club. If East plays the queen to Trick 1 and I wish to win, it will be best to win quickly, just as I would from king and one. If the seven is fourth best, then East's queen would mark West with ace-ten to four or more; winning would be right if I intended to play West for the king of hearts. Ducking would be right if West had five clubs to the ace and the jack of hearts without the king, but that is less likely: I think I will win if East plays the queen. None of this turns out to be relevant, however, as East wins the ace of clubs and returns the eight of diamonds.

That certainly gives this hand a new look. I stop to think some more, visibly annoying the opponents. Sorry, guys. It seems that East must have started with a singleton ace of clubs. That is a favorable development, to be sure, giving me more time to develop tricks. How do the diamonds lie? East could be fooling me, but I am inclined to believe the eight, which means the jack is on my left. It is quite likely to fall in the first three rounds, given that West has six clubs. Hearts is the obvious place to look for extra tricks, but the combination of the 6-1 club split and passive diamond return suggests to me that there is more than the usual chance they will lie badly. If that is the case, perhaps I can throw East in with a spade to force a heart return. Since dummy has only one entry, I will have to strip the East hand of diamonds before exiting in spades. This line appeals to me, and I start by winning the ace of diamonds, West following small. When I follow with the king, West plays the nine and East the seven. It is looking like they are 3-3, and when I continue with the queen, West produces the jack and East follows. I may as well take the last diamond, on which West and dummy throw clubs, and East a heart.

I cash the ace of spades and lead the second spade towards the dummy. I am hoping to duck this to East, and I don't really want to see an honor from West. It would be hard for him to play an honor from

an original holding of three, not knowing whether I might have four spades (thank you, partner). He in fact follows to the second round with the eight, and I insert the ten. East wins the queen and returns the nine of spades. I throw a heart, taking West's jack with the king. The position is now:

♠	4
♥	Q 10 6
♦	—
♣	9
♠	—
♥	A 5 4
♦	—
♣	K J

I need to find one just more trick, and I think I can do that by exiting with dummy's last spade. If West happens to have the fourth spade, he will have no heart to return, being 4-0-3-6. I can let him lead into my club tenace, or I can have a little fun by throwing the jack of clubs, winning the club return and endplaying East in hearts. I lead dummy's spade, and it turns out that East has the last spade. I throw my jack of clubs. East is down to all hearts, and I win the forced return in dummy. I have two more tricks in hand, for a total of nine, the full deal being:

♠ K 10 4 2
♥ Q 10 6
♦ 10 6 2
♣ 9 5 2

♠ J 8 5
 ♥ 4
 ♦ J 9 3
 ♣ Q 10 8 7 4 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ Q 9 7 3
♥ K J 9 8 2
♦ 8 7 4
♣ A

♠ A 6
 ♥ A 5 4 3
 ♦ A K Q 5
 ♣ K J 6

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A BETTER ONE

With both sides vulnerable in a strong team match, I deal as South and hold:

♠ A K Q J 10 8 ♥ 7 3 ♦ A Q 6 ♣ A Q

I open **two clubs**, the big bid in our system. Partner bids **two hearts**, a natural positive, and I jump to **three spades**, which sets spades as trumps and requests cuebidding. Partner bids **four hearts** and I, having done enough for the moment, sign off in **four spades**. Partner is not satisfied, though, bidding **five hearts**. That is enough encouragement for me to bid **six spades**. Everyone passes, the bidding having been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
			2♣
pass	2♥	pass	3♠
pass	4♥	pass	4♠
pass	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

I am hoping for a minor suit lead, but West starts with the four of spades. Partner puts down his hand, and I see I have an interesting play problem:

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

I win the opening trump lead and draw two more rounds, West discarding the club three on the third round. There are eleven top tricks, and I see two lines of play that are heavy favorites. I could cross on a heart to take a minor suit finesse. If that fails, I can go back again in hearts and cash the third round. If hearts don't split, I can then try the other finesse.

Alternatively, I can play for hearts to be no worse than 4-2. I can surrender a heart, making my contract with four heart tricks whenever they are 3-3 or 4-2. If the hearts are 5-1, I can still take a finesse, and I see some squeeze chances.

This second line looks better, and just in time I see that it can be improved upon. I play all six rounds of spades before playing a heart. West throws the five and ten of clubs, and the eight of diamonds. I keep all dummy's hearts and come down to singletons in both minors. East pitches the two, seven and eight of clubs. The position is now:

♠ —
♥ A K Q 8 4
♦ 7
♣ 9
♠ —
♥ 7 3
♦ A Q 6
♣ A Q

I now lead a small heart and cover West's spot with the eight. East wins the ten and shifts to the jack of clubs. I go up with the ace, and West discards the jack of diamonds. It's time to think again. The hearts are good unless someone started with five. Could that be East? If so, I can squeeze him by cashing the ace of diamonds. That's very unlikely though — a 7-0 diamond split. It is far more likely that West has five hearts, which means he is down to a singleton diamond. If that is the case, it won't matter what it is, because East will have to come down to a singleton diamond to keep the king of clubs when I run the hearts. I lead a heart to the ace, East showing out. I follow with the king of hearts and then lead the queen of hearts in this endgame:

♠ —
 ♥ Q 4
 ♦ 7
 ♣ —

 ♠ —
 ♥ —
 ♦ A Q
 ♣ Q

East plays the nine of diamonds. I discard the queen of clubs, and when I play a diamond from dummy, East plays the ten. I know his last card is the king of clubs, so I go up ace and drop West's king. The full deal was:

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

Declarer's play of all the trumps, after rejecting the try-all-three-chances line, reminds me of advice Bobby Fischer had for another game. You have found a good move. Excellent! Now find a better one.

This deal is based on one in Tony Forrester's very entertaining *The Bridge Player's Bedside Book*. It is a very complicated hand to defend, but West had two chances to do better. One is to bare the king of diamonds on the spades, keeping a club. Now when East wins the heart and plays a club, the position won't be clear.

The other defensive possibility is for West to throw all his clubs, as he did, but then go in with the jack of hearts on the first round — a kind of desperation crocodile coup. Presumably declarer will continue with his plan, by playing low. Now East's ten falls, so the eight is good if declarer wants to take a finesse. But when West continues a heart, declarer is likely to go up. Then he has to guess which finesse to take. Alternatively East, not wanting to be on lead with the ten of hearts, could discard it on the run of the spades.

The deal might have been even more spectacular if West happened to hold both minor suit kings. On the run of the spades, he has to bare both of them to keep all five hearts. Now, if East wins the first round of hearts, a king is sure to fall whichever suit East returns. To prevent this, West again goes in with the jack of hearts on the first round, and plays another when declarer ducks. What declarer does now is anyone's guess.



BUBBLES

My opponents at rubber bridge are both strong performers. East on my right opens **one club**, both sides are vulnerable, and I hold

♠ A Q J 10 2 ♥ J 7 4 3 ♦ K J ♣ 10 4

I overcall **one spade**, and the next hand passes. My partner, a bit of an impetuous bidder, leaps to **four spades**. No one has anything to say to that, so the bidding has been:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
pass	4♠	1♣ all pass	1♠

West leads the five of clubs, and partner puts down a strong hand:

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

Partner has his values, certainly, but I would rather he were on play in three notrump, and a slower auction might have got us there. East wins the king and ace of clubs, West following with the three, and then plays a third club, the nine.

Some of the members of the club lead the middle card from three low ones, so West could be fooling us all, concealing the seven. How

likely is that? A vulnerable one notrump opening shows 15 to 17 points, so if East has opened a three-card club suit, he will have a balanced hand of 13 or 14 points. He would be marked with the ace of hearts, and I would expect him to prefer one heart with ace fourth, or one diamond on any four, in preference to a three-card opening. It is just possible for him to be 4-3-3-3 with four bad spades, so I can play for that if I see nothing else. If I ruff this club high and draw trumps, I have five spades, two diamonds, and two clubs for nine tricks. Where can I get a tenth? The diamond finesse may be right, but I am one entry short to untangle my tricks.

Wait a second — I see dummy has the eight of spades. That could be my extra needed entry, in one of two ways. If the nine of spades is *doubleton*, I can overtake an honor on the second round of spades. When the nine falls, I play a diamond to the jack, cash the king, and get back to dummy with the deuce of spades to the eight. Alternatively, if the spade nine is *onside*, I can play low to the eight on the first round. How do these approaches compare? Assuming spades are 3-2, which we need anyway in order to enjoy the long clubs in addition to three diamond tricks, there are eight doubleton nines (four on each side) compared with ten ways for West to have the nine (four doubleton nines, six third nines). That would make the finesse superior, except for one thing. West, who knows all the plays, might insert the nine on the two, preventing the extra entry, blocking the spades and leaving me with no play at all.

Thinking along different lines, could I exert pressure by running the trumps? If East has a balanced hand with the ace of hearts and queen of diamonds, he shouldn't have the queen of hearts, for that would give him 15 high card points. So if I can win a diamond finesse and run my winners, both defenders will need to keep diamonds and hearts, and I don't think they can do that. I ruff the third club with the queen and play the jack of trumps, to which all follow. I continue with the ten of spades. If West follows with the nine, I can overtake, try the diamond finesse, and later get back to dummy with the eight of spades. However, West's spade is the six, so I let my ten win, East following. I now play the two of trumps to dummy's king, and cash the clubs, throwing hearts. East, who threw his last club on the third trump, pitches a diamond and a heart, as does West. This is the position, with dummy to play:

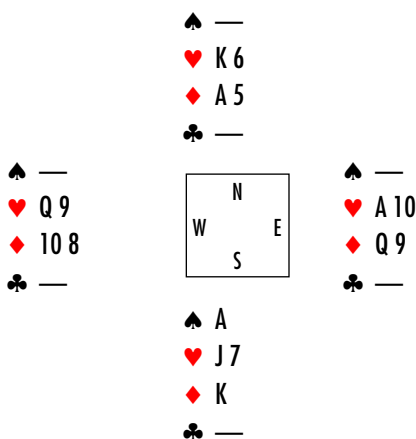
♠ —
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ A 5 3
 ♣ —

 ♠ A
 ♥ J 7
 ♦ K J
 ♣ —

I lead a diamond and finesse the jack successfully. When I play my last trump, West discards the nine of hearts. I throw the little heart from dummy, and East discards the queen of diamonds. If my calculations are correct, I know I have them. The defense has kept the AQ10 of hearts and three diamonds. I cash the king of diamonds, to which all follow, and play a heart. If East has kept a diamond with his ace of hearts, he will have to surrender Trick 13 to dummy's ace. In fact he has kept a heart, but that means West's queen falls at Trick 12. My jack wins Trick 13, and I just make four spades. This was the full deal:

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

Let's have another look at West's discard in the four-card ending:



The heart discard is correct, as it will defeat the contract if East holds the jack of hearts. At this point, as my friend Fred Gitelman humorously pointed out, any of the four cards can be thrown from dummy. Fred is a quick thinker, but I suspect Deep Finesse may have been tugging his elbow on that one.

If the defense keeps three diamonds and three hearts, declarer can happily cash the king of diamonds, knowing that he will win Trick 13 one way or another. If the defense keeps four diamonds, declarer will prevail whether he cashes the king of diamonds or not. So it might seem that the defense is best off keeping just two diamonds. Declarer has an answer to this, too. He leads the king of diamonds. If West shows out, he lets the king win and uses East's ace of hearts as a stepping-stone to the ace of diamonds. If West shows in, he overtakes with dummy's ace. Now if East follows, the last diamond is good. If not, dummy exits with the king of hearts, winking a trick for the jack.

I got this deal from Ewart Kempson's *First Pocket Book of Bridge Problems*. Pondering it during a luxurious hot bath, I came up with the line of play in the text. Kempson, while noting that West might foil the plan by inserting the nine, had suggested finessing the eight of spades. That brings me to a small confession: I adjusted the conditions by specifying a 15-17 notrump range. According to my reference on 1950's Acol, Reese's *Modern Bidding and the Acol System*, a vulnerable one notrump would be 16-18. That would make Kempson's line better, and it must be said that even in the twenty-first century, not many Wests are going to fly in with the nine of spades, other than to give count or suit

preference or whatnot. Nonetheless, I was proud of having found my interesting line of play, so I sent the deal and my analysis off to Fred Gitelman. He published it as a 'Deal of the Week' on his website, as usual providing a gracious credit.

That seemed a satisfactory end to a pleasant story. Sometime later I was at the local library doing research for my first book, when I came across an account of a match staged back in the eighties. The organizers of this event had invited such illustrious stars as Omar Sharif and Zia Mahmood to play a set of prepared deals, for later broadcast on Britain's Channel Four. I read through the book, and was bemused to find this very deal, together with all of what I had thought was my original analysis, staring out at me.

It was some years later when I chose this deal to conclude *Card by Card*. I felt I should mention the author and title of the book where I had seen my analysis; I had a vague recollection of them, but I wanted to be right. I also felt like reading the book again, so I went back to the library to find it. Alas, it was no longer there. Libraries discard old books at an alarming rate. Vestiges of it remained on the library's website, however: the title and author, *Master Bridge* by Nicola Gardener, and, like a baleful, cybernetic tombstone, the information 'Holdings: 0'.

I'm glad I read that book while I had the chance. At first I was disappointed not to have been the first to come up with the analysis of this book's final deal. Now, I take some comfort in the thought that I am not the only one who likes to lie around and ponder problems in old bridge books.

This book gives a reader the chance to follow an expert's thought processes as declarer or defender on deals taken from top-level play. As usual in this type of presentation the reader is offered the opportunity to make his own decisions at critical points in the play, and will be able to learn from situations where an expert took a different line of play – rightly or wrongly!

Praise for Roy Hughes' previous book, *Building a Bidding System*:

'I wish I had written this book' – *The Bridge World*

'Unique, thought-provoking and beautifully crafted' – *ACBL Bulletin*

'What could have been a dry subject is brought to life by Hughes' excellent, conversational writing style.' – *IBPA Bulletin*



ROY HUGHES (Toronto) is a Canadian expert who has played in a number of World Championships. His previous book, *Building a Bidding System*, was runner-up for the 2005 IBPA Book of the Year award.



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