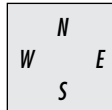


PROBLEM 41

To Answer

You are South, declarer in 2♠ for a change.

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



♠ A K 7 6
 ♥ Q 6 5
 ♦ 7 5 4 3
 ♣ 6 3

West	North	East	South
	1♣	1♥	1♠
pass	2♣	all pass	

North opens 1♣ and East overcalls 1♥. You have 9 HCP and four spades, so you respond 1♠. Partner, with a minimum opening hand and four spades, raises to 2♣ and everyone passes.

West leads the ♥2.

What is your plan?

Analysis

You have two possible losers in hearts, four in diamonds and one in clubs. However, things are promising because three of your diamond losers can be ruffed in dummy and/or thrown on club winners.

East surely has the ♥K for the overcall so if you duck in dummy and East takes the ♥K, your ♥Q will be set up.

Is this the best way to proceed?

<p>♠ J 10 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K Q J 2 ♣ A 8 5 4 2</p>	<p>♠ Q 9 8 4 ♥ A 8 3 ♦ 10 ♣ K Q J 10 9</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100px; height: 100px; margin: 10px auto; position: relative;"> <div style="position: absolute; top: 5px; left: 45px;">N</div> <div style="position: absolute; top: 50px; left: 5px;">W</div> <div style="position: absolute; top: 50px; right: 5px;">E</div> <div style="position: absolute; bottom: 5px; left: 45px;">S</div> </div> <p>♠ A K 7 6 ♥ Q 6 5 ♦ 7 5 4 3 ♣ 6 3</p>	<p>♠ 5 3 ♥ K J 10 9 7 4 ♦ A 9 8 6 ♣ 7</p>
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The lead of the ♥2 is ominous. A two is often the lowest card from four because the common lead from a long suit is the fourth highest. It may also be the lowest from a three-card suit containing an honor. It cannot be from a doubleton because the standard lead from a doubleton is the higher card. But here, because East has at least five hearts for the overall, the ♥2 is clearly a singleton!

Look what happens if you duck the lead in dummy. East wins the ♥K and returns a heart, which West ruffs. West then leads a diamond to East's ace and East leads another heart, which West ruffs. Then West leads the ♣A and another club for East to ruff. You have just lost six tricks whilst watching helplessly from the sidelines. Your partner is looking equally stunned!

The sight of the ♥2 should ring alarm bells. You should immediately win with the ♥A, lead three rounds of trumps to deprive the defenders of their fun, and then play clubs until the defenders take their ♣A. When they do they may cash their ♦A, and possibly the ♥K, which will set up your ♥Q as a winner. In any case you will be able to dispose of three losers on the established clubs and ruff a diamond in dummy.

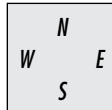
You will end up with only three losers. That gives you ten tricks instead of seven!

Key Point

The opening lead of the two of a suit can be quite revealing.

You are South, declarer in 3NT.

♠ 10 7 2
 ♥ J 8 5
 ♦ A 10 8 7
 ♣ 8 3 2



♠ A K Q
 ♥ A K 2
 ♦ K J 6 4
 ♣ A 10 4

West	North	East	South
			2♣
pass	2♦	pass	2NT
pass	3NT	all pass	

You have been dealt a monster hand with 24 HCP so you open 2♣, your strongest bid. North responds with an artificial 2♦, waiting. You rebid 2NT showing a balanced 22-24 HCP. North happily raises you to game.

West leads the ♣K.

How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

You have eight top tricks — three spades, two hearts, two diamonds and a club. The diamond suit is the obvious candidate for an extra trick.

The clubs are a worry because you have only one stopper. So to get an idea of the distribution of clubs in the West and East hands, you should hold up your ace until the third round. East discards a spade on the third round of clubs. Aha! West started with five clubs and East with two.

How will you proceed?

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

It may feel normal at Trick 4 to play to the ♦A and then the seven to your jack to finesse against the queen, but that spells doom. West will take the ♦Q and cash two more club tricks.

Since you have the ♦10 as well as the jack, you can finesse either West or East for the queen. East is known to be out of clubs, so you should take the finesse in such a way that if it loses, East will be on lead and cannot continue clubs. So at Trick 4, play the ♦K and then the ♦4 to the ♦10 in dummy. Virtue is rewarded when the ten holds the trick and you make an overtrick.

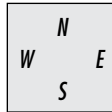
You don't always have the luxury of a two-way finesse, but be aware of which is the danger hand.

Key Point

Lose tricks to the safe hand if possible.

You are South, declarer in 3NT.

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



♠ A K 4
 ♥ A 8 7 2
 ♦ 3 2
 ♣ K Q 4 3

West	North	East	South
pass	3NT	all pass	1NT

You have a balanced hand with 16 points, so you open 1NT. Partner has 10 points with a promising diamond suit and raises you to game.

The lead is the ♣7. How do you play the hand?

Analysis

The first thing to do is to count your winners. You have two in spades, one in hearts and two in diamonds — that's five, a long way from nine.

Two tricks can be developed in clubs but that is not enough. The source of salvation is the diamond suit. If the opponents' diamonds split 3-2 there are five tricks to be had. So you have to assume that they will split 3-2. However, if you play the ace, king and another first there will be no entry to dummy to enjoy the winners.

The answer is to lose a trick in diamonds first — that is, to duck the first round of diamonds in dummy. That way you retain an entry to dummy.

East plays the ♣10 on the opening lead and you win in your hand with the king. Now as per your plan, you play the ♦2. West plays the queen! This is unexpected. What do you do now?

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

Do not be diverted from your quest! It is tempting to capture the queen with the ace but you had already determined that you cannot make the contract unless the diamonds split 3-2. So duck the diamond as planned! If you capture the queen, you will not make the contract.

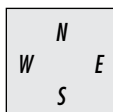
It was extremely cunning of West to play the queen on the first round of diamonds. Most people would be fooled by it, but not you.

Key Point

Don't be afraid to give up a trick early. Sometimes it is the only way to make your contract.

You are South, declarer in 4♥.

♠ Q 6 2
 ♥ Q J 6 3
 ♦ K Q J
 ♣ 9 8 6



♠ A K 9
 ♥ 10 9 8 7 2
 ♦ 7 4
 ♣ A K 5

West	North	East	South
pass	pass	pass	1♥
pass	3♥	pass	4♥
all pass			

You have 14 HCP and a weak heart suit and open 1♥. North gives you a double raise to 3♥, showing 10-12 points and four-card trump support. Your heart suit has perked up with partner's support and you bid game.

West leads the ♣Q.

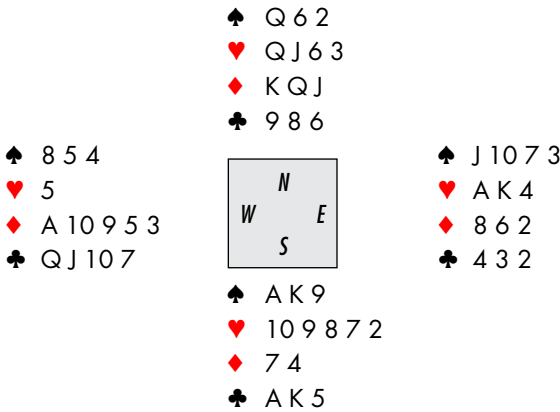
How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

Looking at losers, you have two in hearts and one each in diamonds and clubs. How can you get rid of one of them? There is nothing to trump in dummy, so you need to look at getting an extra trick from a side suit.

The diamond suit looks promising. Once the ace is knocked out you will have two tricks and could discard your club loser.

How do you go about the play?



You win the club lead with the ace.

You should not play trumps immediately. If you do, the opponents will take their ♥A and then lead another club, which takes out your king and exposes the club loser. Then when you knock out the ♦A, they will cash their club winner.

The key is to play diamonds first so that you establish a diamond winner on which to discard your club loser. Play a small one from your hand to the king in dummy. If this is ducked by the opponents, continue with the queen. Whenever they take the ace, your jack is promoted to a winner. You then go to dummy, either by leading your remaining diamond if the ace was taken on the first round, or by leading a spade to the queen. Then discard the ♣5 on the high diamond in dummy. Now it is time to draw trumps.

The only tricks you lose are one diamond and two trumps, making your contract.

Key Point

Delay drawing trumps if necessary, in order to establish a winner in a side suit on which to discard a loser.

You are East. South is playing 3NT.

♠ K Q
 ♥ 10 9 8
 ♦ A K Q J 10 7
 ♣ A K

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A 5 3 2
 ♥ K 4
 ♦ 9 8 6
 ♣ 8 7 5 4

West	North	East	South
	2♣	pass	2♦
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

North has a big hand with 22 HCP and opens 2♣. South responds 2♦ (waiting) and North, with powerful diamonds, bids 3♦. South is not interested, however, and North gives up any hope of slam and settles for game in 3NT.

West leads the ♠10 and declarer plays the ♠K, which you take with the ♠A. Partners generally like you to return their suit. Should you do this?

Analysis

Looking at dummy, things seem rather desperate. After you take the ♠A you can see that there are nine winners in dummy — one spade, six diamonds and two clubs. You would normally have considered holding up the ♠A with the ♠KQ in dummy, but not in this case.

Is there anything you can do?

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

There is only one suit that holds any promise for your side and that is hearts. If you return partner's suit or lead diamonds or clubs, you can see that declarer will rattle off nine tricks without raising a sweat. So hearts it is. Which card should you lead?

You must lead the ♥K! It is not very comfortable leading an unsupported king but look what happens if you lead the ♥4. If declarer plays the ♥Q, partner will win the ♥A and lead another heart to your ♥K, but you can't get back to partner's hand. If declarer instead plays a low heart, partner can win with the ♥J and play the ♥A capturing your ♥K but then declarer's ♥Q is high.

You must bite the bullet and play the ♥K. See how much easier it is now — the ♥K wins and you play the ♥4 and declarer's ♥Q is trapped. Partner takes four more heart tricks and the contract is defeated by two tricks.

It is true that if partner had led from that heart suit instead of safely playing the top of a sequence, your side could have wrapped up five quick heart tricks, but partners are not perfect and don't always make the best lead for a particular hand.

Key Point

If there is only one way to defeat the contract, go for it!