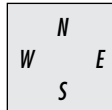


You are South, declarer in 6♦.

♠ A 5 3
 ♥ 7
 ♦ 10 9 7 2
 ♣ A J 8 4 3



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

West	North	East	South
			1♦
pass	2♣	pass	3♦
pass	4♦	pass	5♦
pass	6♦	all pass	

You have a hand with a lot of potential. You open 1♦ and partner bids 2♣. You jump to 3♦ with your strong suit and partner raises to 4♦. You happily bid game. Partner, with two aces, a singleton heart and good diamond support, decides to put you in slam. Help!

West leads the ♠Q.
 What is your plan?

Analysis

You have three losers in spades and the ace of trumps is out. One spade can be discarded on the ♣A but that still leaves two more to be disposed of.

You can't afford to draw trumps immediately because the spade losers are exposed. This means the opponents could take their ♦A and cash spades.

How will you proceed?

<p>♠ QJ976 ♥ 965432 ♦ — ♣ 105</p>	<p>♠ A53 ♥ 7 ♦ 10972 ♣ AJ843</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: fit-content; margin: 0 auto;"> <table style="width: 100%; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <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> </div> <p>♠ 10842 ♥ AKQ ♦ KQJ653 ♣ —</p>		N		W		E		S		<p>♠ K ♥ J108 ♦ A84 ♣ KQ9762</p>
	N										
W		E									
	S										

You take the opening lead with the ♠A, East following with the ♠K, which probably indicates a singleton.

The only way to dispose of the two spade losers is to ruff them in dummy. To prepare for this, play a heart from dummy to the ♥A in hand and then play the ♥K and ♥Q, discarding two spades from dummy. Now there are no spades left in dummy.

Now lead a small spade from your hand and ruff it in dummy. Because East played the ♠K on the first trick it is important to ruff high with the ♦10, which can only be overruffed by the ♦A. It would be a mistake to ruff with the ♦2 or the ♦7 because East would overruff with the ♦8.

If East does not overruff the ♦10, play the ♣A discarding a spade from your hand and lead a small club ruffing it in your hand. Then play another small spade and ruff it with the ♦9 in dummy. That's the end of the spades and the opponents will win the ♦A and nothing else.

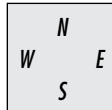
If East does overruff the ♦10 with the ♦A, nothing can prevent you from ruffing another spade in dummy and discarding one on the ♣A.

Key Point

Delay drawing trumps if necessary, in order to ruff losers in dummy.

You are South, declarer in 4♥.

♠ K Q 7 6
 ♥ 9 8 6
 ♦ A K 5 3
 ♣ 3 2



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

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♥
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	4♥	all pass	

You have a minimum balanced hand with five hearts so you open 1♥, and after partner responds 1♠ you bid 1NT. Partner has an opening hand with three hearts and raises you to game.

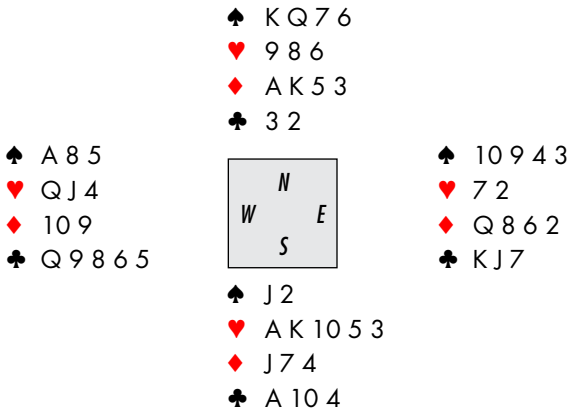
West leads the ♦10.

What is your plan?

Analysis

You have one loser in spades, one in diamonds and two in clubs as well as one in hearts and only if they behave. A club loser can be ruffed in dummy so you need to eliminate one more.

What is the best way to proceed?



You should aim to knock out the ♠A and discard a diamond loser on the third round of spades. It is best to do this early because the opponents may lead another diamond when they get in.

Take the opening lead with the ♦A in dummy and lead a low spade to the ♠J in your hand. West will most likely win this with the ♠A and lead the ♦9, which you will take with the ♦K.

Now you can afford one round of trumps, so lead a small heart to the ♥A in your hand. Since you need to ruff a club in dummy later and you are going to have to lose the lead to achieve this, you cannot afford a second round of trumps. When the opponents get in they can lead a trump and you won't have one left in dummy to trump your club loser.

Next, lead the ♠2 to the ♠K in dummy and discard the ♦J on the ♠Q. That gets rid of your diamond loser. Now you can turn your attention to the club loser. Lead a small club from dummy to your ♣A and then duck a club. You can win any return and then ruff a club loser.

You will end up with only three losers — a spade, a heart and a club.

Key Point

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

PROBLEM 48

To Answer

You are South, declarer in 4♠.

♠ A 6
 ♥ 8 7 5 4
 ♦ J 9 6
 ♣ A K 7 6



♠ K Q J 10 9 3
 ♥ A K 2
 ♦ 7 3 2
 ♣ 9

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	1NT	pass	4♠
all pass			

North opens 1♣ and you respond 1♠. North rebids 1NT, showing a balanced hand with 12-14 HCP. With your solid six-card spade suit, you have no hesitation in jumping to game.

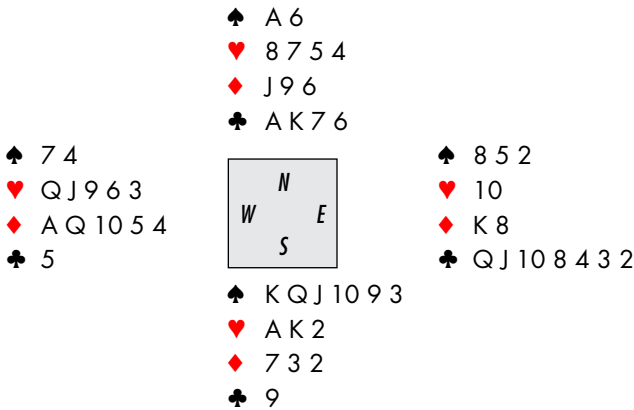
West leads the ♣5. You win with the ♣A in dummy.

What is your plan?

Analysis

You have a loser in hearts and probably three losers in diamonds so you need to eliminate one. You note that a loser can be discarded on the ♣K.

How will you proceed?



Entries to dummy are scarce so you need to choose the right time to take the discard on the ♣K. The temptation is to do it immediately, since the lead is in dummy when you win the ♣A. However, if you do that, West will ruff, and you will still have three more losers.

You can't draw all the opponents' trumps before you take the discard on the ♣K because you need at least three rounds of spades to do that. If you play more than two spades, you won't have an entry to dummy to cash the ♣K, but for maximum safety you should take two rounds to eliminate as many enemy trumps as possible. So lead a small spade to the ♠K in your hand then a small one from your hand to the ♠A in dummy. Both opponents follow, so there is only one trump at large. Now discard either a heart or a diamond on the ♣K. Fortunately, West has no more trumps and cannot ruff in. Now return to your hand by ruffing a club and draw the last trump.

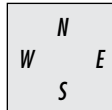
It was unlucky that the clubs were split 7-1, but safe play saved the day.

Key Point

Draw trumps early unless you have a good reason for delay, such as trumping a loser in dummy or taking a discard.

You are South, declarer in 3NT.

♠ A Q 10 8 7
 ♥ 6
 ♦ J 9 6 5 2
 ♣ A K



♠ 5 3
 ♥ A K Q
 ♦ 8 7 3
 ♣ Q J 10 9 8

West	North	East	South
		pass	1♣
pass	1♠	pass	1NT
pass	3♦	pass	3NT
all pass			

You have a balanced hand with 12 HCP so you open 1♣. Partner, with two five-card suits, responds 1♠, the higher one. You rebid 1NT with your minimum hand and partner jumps to 3♦ showing an opening hand and a diamond suit. You cannot support either of partner's suits, but you have hearts well and truly stopped so you bid 3NT.

West leads the ♥5, which you win in hand with the ♥A.

How do you plan to play the hand?

Analysis

You have six immediate winners — one spade, three hearts and two clubs. In fact, you have the top five clubs but once you play the ace and king there is no way back to your hand to cash the queen, jack and ten!

Can you see any way of releasing the club suit from its bonds?

<p>♠ 9 6 ♥ 5 4 3 2 ♦ A K 4 ♣ 7 6 5 3</p>	<p>♠ A Q 10 8 7 ♥ 6 ♦ J 9 6 5 2 ♣ A K</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: 0 auto; display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">N</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">W</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">S</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 5px;">E</div> </div> <p>♠ 5 3 ♥ A K Q ♦ 8 7 3 ♣ Q J 10 9 8</p>	<p>♠ K J 4 2 ♥ J 10 9 8 7 ♦ Q 10 ♣ 4 2</p>
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If you could make the ♣A and ♣K disappear, the ♣QJ1098 could take five tricks, bringing your total to nine — five clubs, three hearts and a spade.

There is a way to make them disappear. Just discard them immediately on the ♥K and ♥Q!

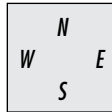
It is so counter-intuitive to discard aces and kings that the solution is elusive, but it is really neat when you see it.

Key Point

Sometimes one suit can be used to unblock another.

You are East. South is declarer in 5♣.

♠ 9 8 6
 ♥ K J 8 4 2
 ♦ 8 5
 ♣ Q 9 8



♠ A 7 5 3
 ♥ 5 3
 ♦ K Q 9 7 6
 ♣ A 7

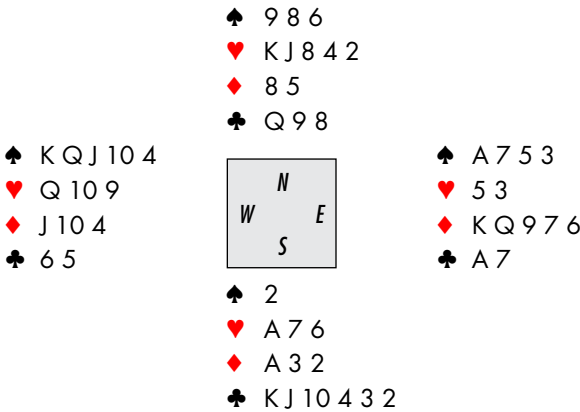
West	North	East	South
			1♣
1♠	2♣	4♠	5♣
all pass			

South opens 1♣ and West overcalls 1♠. North makes a single raise and you leap to 4♠. South buys the contract in 5♣. You think about doubling, but you're not sure who can make what, so you take a conservative view and pass.

Your partner leads the ♠K. How do you plan the defense?

Analysis

- How many spades does partner have?
- How many spade tricks can your side take?
- What other sources of tricks are there?



Partner has overcalled in spades, showing at least a five-card suit. With your four spades and dummy's three this leaves one spade for South at most, so your side cannot take more than one spade trick.

You will win a trick with the ♣A for sure. What other sources of tricks are there? You have the ♦KQ so you can probably set up a diamond trick while you still have the ♣A.

The key point here is that you know that a diamond switch is the right play, but partner may not! Partner may well continue spades at Trick 2, which could be disastrous. So you must take charge of the defense. Overtake partner's ♠K with your ♠A and switch to the ♦K and partner will love you forever. Well, until the next deal at least!

If the defenders don't switch to a diamond, declarer will make the contract by taking a heart finesse and then throwing the losing diamonds on dummy's long hearts.

Key Point

Take charge of the defense when you can see the way home!