

A Double Feature
David J. Weiss
Fullerton, CA

Imps
South dealer
Both sides vulnerable

SOUTH
♠Q83
♥AJ7
♦AJ76
♣A86

Both vulnerable

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1NT	Pass	2♦	Pass
2♥	Pass	2NT	Pass
?			

With the heart jack meriting a slight upgrade opposite partner's five-card suit, your hand has improved.

How do you elect to accept partner's invitation?

- a) Considering that your pattern is ultra-balanced and that you have a high card in every suit, you accept by bidding 3NT. Go to page X, or
- b) Considering your excellent heart support and potential weakness in a black suit, you accept by bidding 4♥. Go to page Y.

NORTH

♠A7
♥Q6543
♦Q1085
♣J10

SOUTH

♠Q83
♥AJ7
♦AJ76
♣A86

West leads the spade four. You play low from dummy. East wins the king and returns the spade ten. West follows with the two.

What is your plan?

Fortunately, East returned his partner's suit rather than speculating with what might have been a damaging club shift. Now your hope is to bring home six tricks in the red suits. Attacking hearts first will be fine if someone has a doubleton king, but if that suit is not so obliging, you may not be able to take the diamond finesse.

It looks better to go after diamonds first, as there will often be a reentry within that suit. If East has one, two, or three diamonds including the king, you will have four tricks there and can get two heart tricks easily.

You play the diamond queen at trick three. East plays the four, you play the seven, and West wins the king. So the diamond suit will produce only three tricks. West continues with the spade six; you discard a club from dummy, and East follows with the spade five.

You cash the diamond ace, on which East discards the club two.

How will you get three more tricks from the heart suit?

Although opponents cannot always be trusted, it seems as though West has five spades and East three. In that case, you can afford to lose a trick to East if the hearts are three-two. Of course, if West has the heart king, you are down. Even if the defenders have been falsecarding in the spade suit (which would be quite dangerous when the auction has revealed nothing about your distribution) you are still in good shape if the suit is split evenly.

A four-one heart division would seem troublesome. While West, marked with four diamonds and presumed to hold five spades, cannot have four hearts (East would have bid an eight-card club suit), East can. Can you make if East has four hearts to the king? You could take two more diamonds, lead a heart to the jack, and then endplay East in

clubs. All you need for that to succeed is that East's clubs include the king, queen, and nine. After the fourth diamond, the ending will be something like this:

NORTH

♠

♥Q6543

♦

♣J

EAST

♠

♥K109

♦

♣KQ9

SOUTH

♠

♥AJ7

♦

♣A86

Is that your best chance?

Hardly. Even if the unlikely concentration of club honors existed, you can't be sure East began life with four hearts. If he were to discard a heart on the diamonds, so that he retained enough club winners to defeat the contract, you would have to know to cash the ace after winning the finesse.

You really don't want to go down when hearts are three-two. Play for that holding, with one slight extra chance. Cash the heart ace. It is far more likely that West has the singleton heart king than that East has all of the club high cards and king-fourth of hearts. When the king drops, continue hearts and make an overtrick.

The complete deal:

NORTH

♠A7

♥Q6543

♦Q1085

♣J10

WEST

♠J9642

♥K

♦K932

♣Q93

EAST

♠K105

♥10982

♦4

♣K7542

SOUTH

♠Q83

♥AJ7

♦AJ76

♣A86

Other than by leading or shifting to clubs, could the defense have made your life harder?

West might have ducked the first diamond, but that would have only an emotional effect. When East shows out on the second round, you can play the jack and be in the same position.

East could have tortured you to greater effect by inserting the spade ten. Although that would be wrong if his partner had led from the spade queen, he might have credited you with that card given the auction. Having won the first trick in hand, you could (a) use your spade entry to take a red finesse (the heart finesse is certainly fatal, and losing the diamond finesse forces you to guess hearts when there is no safety consideration supporting banging down the ace) or (b) cash a red ace, either one of which surrenders a substantial chance.

Page Y
Contract 4H

NORTH

♠A7
♥Q6543
♦Q1085
♣J10

SOUTH

♠Q83
♥AJ7
♦AJ76
♣A86

West leads the spade deuce. You play low from dummy. East wins the king and shifts to the club deuce.

What is your plan?

You have to win the club and try to discard dummy's other club on the spade queen. You can then hope to lose at most one trick in each of the red suits. This will dictate how you play those suits.

Which red suit will you use to return to hand, and how will you play that suit?

A successful heart finesse would get you back to hand; but if it loses, the bad guys will score their club and you will need the diamond finesse, as well as a three-two heart split.

Is a four-one heart division insurmountable? If there are two heart losers, you need to get four diamond tricks. Entries to dummy are scarce. Should you follow the classic advice regarding establishing the side suit in a dicey contract, and use the spade entry to hook the diamond? If that finesse fails, you are down unless you can pick up the entire heart suit. And you really don't want to go down when hearts are three-two.

A better tactic is to return to hand via the heart ace, the one sure re-entry, after you cash the spade ace. Pitch dummy's club loser, then lead a low heart from hand. That protects against a spade uppercut if West has five of those and king-doubleton of hearts. If hearts are four-one, you can pursue diamonds when you get to dummy, either via the heart queen or a club ruff. Note that finessing the heart jack does not gain against a four-one split.

As it happens, the king of hearts drops under the ace. Now you can play the jack and queen of hearts before running the diamond queen, hoping for an overtrick.

The complete deal:

NORTH

♠A7
♥Q6543

♦Q1085
♣J10

WEST
♠J9642
♥K
♦K932
♣Q93

EAST
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