

STEP BY STEP DECLARER PLAY

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WHEN EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE GOING WELL...



DEALER SOUTH - NONE VUL.

As South, you are the dealer and you hold the following hand:

- ♠ AKQ874
- ♥ 654
- ♦ K7
- ♣ J6

You open a natural 1♠ and when your partner shows at least four-card support and balanced 11-13HCP by way of a conventional 3NT, you sign off in 4♠:

W	N	E	S
			1♠
Pass	3NT	Pass	4♠

West leads the ♠10.

	♠ J532 ♥ AQ ♦ 432 ♣ AQ32	
	N	
	W	E
	S	
	♠ AKQ874 ♥ 654 ♦ K7 ♣ J6	

Contract: 4 Spades.

Lead: ♠10.

You let the lead run to the Ace in your hand (the 6 from East).

How many sure and potential winners do you see?

You have eight top tricks with six Spades and the Aces in the rounded suits, to which you can add the ruff of one of your three small Hearts with a trump from the short side.

But how can you avoid losing four tricks?

A priori, you need one of three finesses to work: two direct ones against the Kings in the rounded suits and an indirect one

against the Diamond Ace. Your chances of winning are very high (87.5%).

How should you reason in such a case?

Even if all seems to be rather favorable, you must not be satisfied and try, if possible, to do better. You must make an **assumption of fear: all is badly placed!** Assume that East has both missing Kings and West the Diamond Ace and then from there, look for a winning solution.

How can you overcome this terrible fate?

You must think of **transforming the direct Club finesse against the Club King** (let the Jack run or play small towards the Queen to cover the very rare case of West holding the stiff King) **into an indirect finesse** by playing a small Club from dummy towards the Jack.

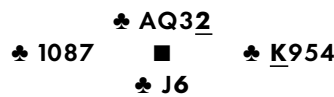
But how does this give you an advantage?

You can be sure to make your contract all the time.

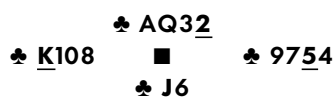
Let's check it:

- If East plays small and the Jack wins the trick, your contract is home.

- If East goes up with the King in order to play through a Diamond, you can later unblock the Club Jack and discard two Hearts from your hand on the Ace-Queen of Clubs (in case West switches to a Heart after two rounds of Diamonds, you of course go up with the Ace!)



-If West can win the trick with the Club King, it doesn't matter; he can't play a Diamond effectively and if he switches to a Heart, you refuse to finesse and can then get rid of your small Diamond on dummy's Club Queen.



Which precautions do you have to take entry-wise?

At trick two, cross to dummy with the Spade 7 or 8, taken with the Jack. Then play a small Club. When East goes up with the King, the defense will take their two Diamonds and you win the Heart continuation with the Ace. Next you unblock the Club Jack and then play the precious 4 of trumps to get to dummy's 5 so that you can cash the Ace-Queen of Clubs.

Actually, was there a killing lead that you escaped?

Yes. A Heart lead would have led to a critical advantage in tempo for the defense and you would have had to lower your flag, given the layout.

	♠ J532 ♥ AQ ♦ 432 ♣ AQ32	
	N	
♠ 109 ♥ J987 ♦ AQ98 ♣ 1087	W	E
	S	
	♠ AKQ874 ♥ 654 ♦ K7 ♣ J6	♠ 6 ♥ K1032 ♦ J1065 ♣ K954

THE PRINCIPLE

Playing teams, when you find yourself in a contract that seems easy to make, it's time for absolute pessimism. Moreover, when you are offered several winning options, the most important thing is the order in which to approach them, without neglecting any possible entry problems that may arise, of course...