

IN this article we look at some of the more difficult suit combinations that you might meet. You won't necessarily memorise them all, but your thought processes as you consider them will help you to tackle future problems you might face at the table. The more you wrap your mind around card combinations, the easier it is to think 'on your feet' while playing. Each one is presented in the form of a puzzle. The answers are at the end. Unless you are told otherwise assume you have plenty of entries to each hand.

(a) Play the spades for 5 tricks.



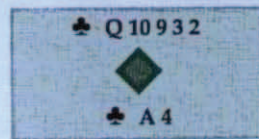
(b) Play the hearts for 3 tricks.



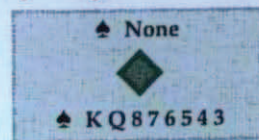
(c) Play the diamonds for 3 tricks.



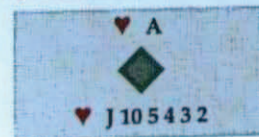
(d) Play the clubs for 4 tricks.



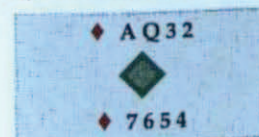
(e) Play the spades for 6 tricks.



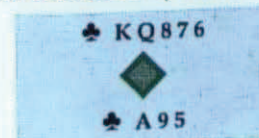
(f) Play the hearts for 4 tricks.



(g) Play the diamonds for 3 tricks.



(h) Play the clubs for 5 tricks. You have no outside entry to either hand.



(i) Play the spades for 4 tricks. West opened the bidding with 1♠, showing a 5-card suit.



## Andrew Kambites

### Try to play these suit combinations



(j) Play the hearts for 5 tricks. West opened the bidding with 1NT.



### Answers

(a) You must hope that West has the ♠A doubleton. Lead a low spade from South to North's ♠Q, then duck a spade completely.

(b) You require East to hold ♥K, singleton, doubleton or tripleton. Lead a low heart from North to your ♥Q. Then duck a heart completely. When you regain the lead enter North's hand and cash the ♥A, hoping the ♥K drops.

(c) You need East to have a singleton, doubleton or tripleton diamond honour, or both diamond honours. You also succeed if West has both diamond honours doubleton or tripleton. Lead a low diamond from North and insert your ♦9. If that loses subsequently cash your ♦A and ♦K hoping North's ♦10 is promoted to winning status.

(d) Cash your ♣A and lead a low club towards North. If neither missing honour has appeared which honour should you play? Assuming West is competent enough to play low with the ♣K you seem to have a guess. Indeed, considering only the 3-3 breaks it is even money whether West started with ♣Kxx or ♣Jxx. However the 4-2 breaks are decisive. If East started with ♣Kx and you play North's ♣10 you still have a club loser. However if East started with ♣Jx and you rise with the ♣Q your problems are

solved. Therefore you should play North's ♣Q.

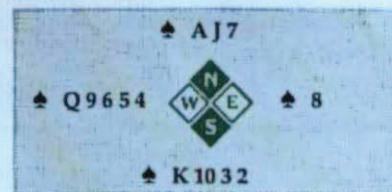
(e) This is the sort of problem you might face if you open 4♠ and partner turns up with no trumps. If spades are 3-2 you have no problem. If they are 4-1 you will usually lose three tricks, but you can escape for only two losers if either defender started with a singleton ♠A. Your first spade must be a low one, then the ♠K on the second round.

(f) Cash the ♥A, and cross to the South hand. If the hearts break 3-3 you are safe for 4 tricks. How about the 4-2 breaks? If either defender has ♥KQ98 you have three losers, but if either defender started with a doubleton honour you can succeed by continuing with a low heart.

(g) This one looks trivial, but it has an interesting psychological twist. Start by leading a low diamond from North! Of course if it loses cheaply your next action upon regaining the lead will be to finesse North's ♦Q. The advantage of leading the first diamond from North is that if East has a holding like ♦K8 he might lose his nerve and rush in with the ♦K.

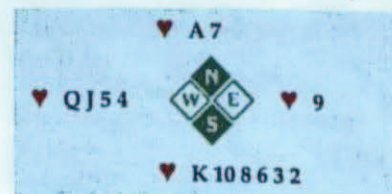
(h) Of course if clubs break 3-2 you will have no problem. What if they are 4-1? You can succeed if East has the ♠10 or ♠J singleton. Start by leading your ♠9 to North's ♠K. Now return to the South hand with the ♠A. If East dropped an honour on the first round and then failed to follow suit on the second round you now have a marked finesse against West's remaining ♠Jx or ♠10x. The importance of unblocking the ♠9 on the first trick is that if you have to take a third round finesse you end in the North hand, enabling you to continue clubs.

(i) You can play for East to have a singleton ♠Q, but it is at least twice as likely that East has the ♠8 or ♠9 singleton, making the layout:



Lead the ♠10 from the South hand to pin East's ♠8. West covers with the ♠Q and you win with North's ♠A. Now return to the South hand by playing another suit and finesse North's ♠7.

(j) If hearts are 3-2 you will easily make 5 tricks. If they are 4-1 it will be West (who opened 1NT) who has four. The only 4-1 break that will not defeat you is:



Start by leading the ♥10 from the South hand, pinning the ♥9. West must cover with an honour, you take the trick with North's ♥A, and now your intermediate hearts are good enough to hold your losers to one.