

Reading the Cards

Card reading is about.....

- Working out where the missing high cards are
- Working out the shape of opponents' hands

and we do this by:

- Analysing and remembering the auction
- Counting HCPs and cards played
- Making necessary assumptions

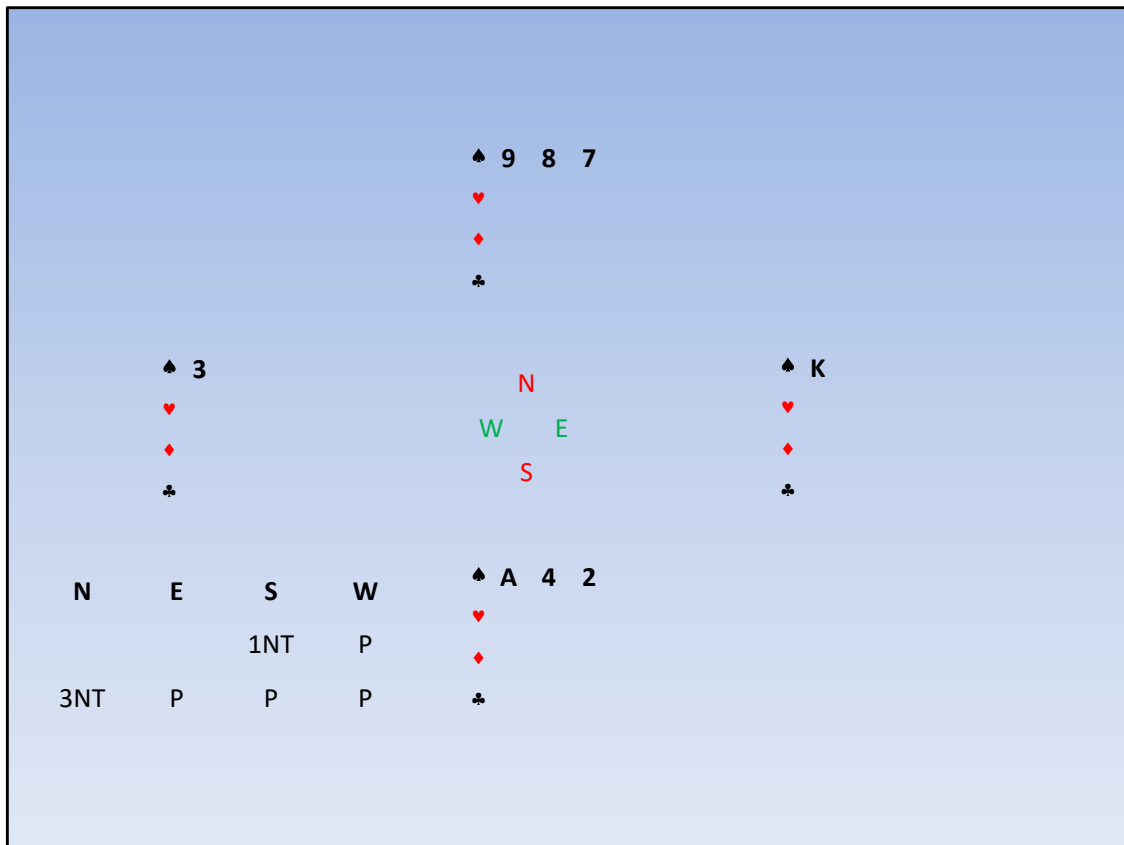
We are playing

- Acol
- Weak NT (12-14)
- Four card majors
- Leads:
 - Fourth highest
 - High-low from doubleton
 - Top of sequences
 - A from AKx(x....)

Caveat

- Card reading will not always achieve the luxury of certainty but it will significantly improve your 'guesses'

Certainty isn't always possible but if you can turn 50:50 finessees into 60:40 chances your scores will improve remarkably.



While the defenders have a responsibility to inform each other about their hands by their choice of cards – top of sequence, high-low with doubleton etc - declarer has no such obligation. West has led a fourth highest ♠3. Declarer decides to duck this trick. If declarer follows with the 2 East will know immediately that West started with four spades. If, instead, declarer plays the 4 East may play West for five spades and miscount the hand. As declarer, don't provide the defenders with certainty when you can create uncertainty.

A Simple Auction

N	E	S	W
			Pass
Pass	Pass	1 ♥	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	Pass	Pass

This auction appears very simple but provides declarer with a surprising amount of information.

				♠ 63						
				♥ KQ75						
				♦ Q87						
				♣ 9652						
					♠ -					
					♥ -					
					♦ A					
					♣ -					
					N					
				W		E				
					S					
				♠ KJ7						
				♥ AJ983						
				♦ 2						
				♣ QJ86						
N	E	S	W							
			P							
P	P	1♥	P							
2♥		All pass								
Lead: ♦A										

Start to analyse this hand and make a plan.



How many high card points (HCPs) do EW have between them?
Always make this calculation at the start of the hand before you play to the first trick. It's much easier than trying to reconstruct the hand later.

				♠ 63				
				♥ KQ75				
				♦ Q87				
				♣ 9652				
				7				
				← 21 →				
				12				
				♠ KJ7				
				♥ AJ983				
				♦ 2				
				♣ QJ87				
				♠ -				
				♥ -				
				♦ A				
				♣ -				
				♠ -				
				♥ -				
				♦ -				
				♣ -				

N	E	S	W	
			P	
P	P	1♥	P	
2♥		All pass		

Lead: ♦ A

EW have 21 HCPs. This tells you immediately that those points are divided 11-10 since any other division would give either E or W enough HCPs to open the bidding. It's also unlikely that either of their hands has any suit of more than five cards since a six card suit might well have been bid with fewer than 12 HCPs. We'll return to this hand later.

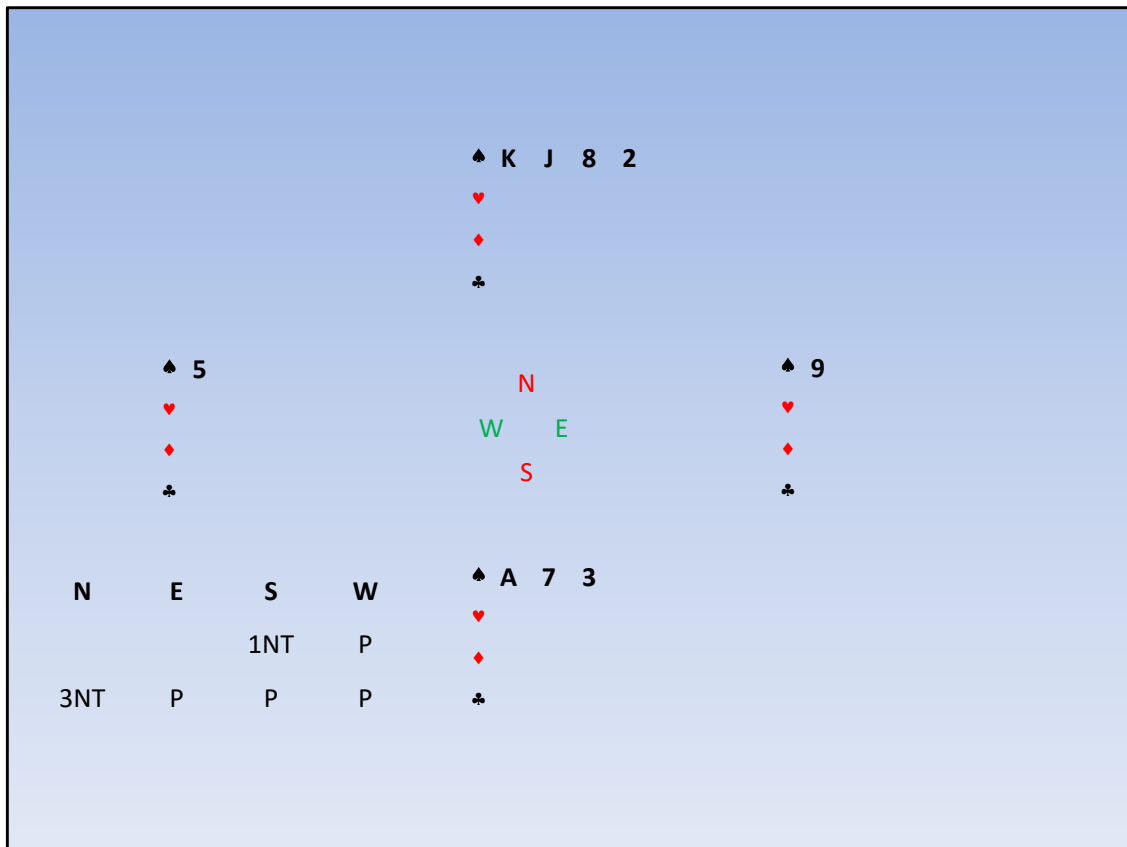
The Opening Lead

The opening lead is the only time a card is played with sight of only one hand. Because of this it is more likely to follow rules like 'fourth highest from longest suit', 'top of sequences' and 'A from AKx'. As a result, what is, and what isn't led can be very informative. We'll analyse various opening leads during the play session but for time being let's look at a couple of examples of the best known analytical tool – the Rule of Eleven.

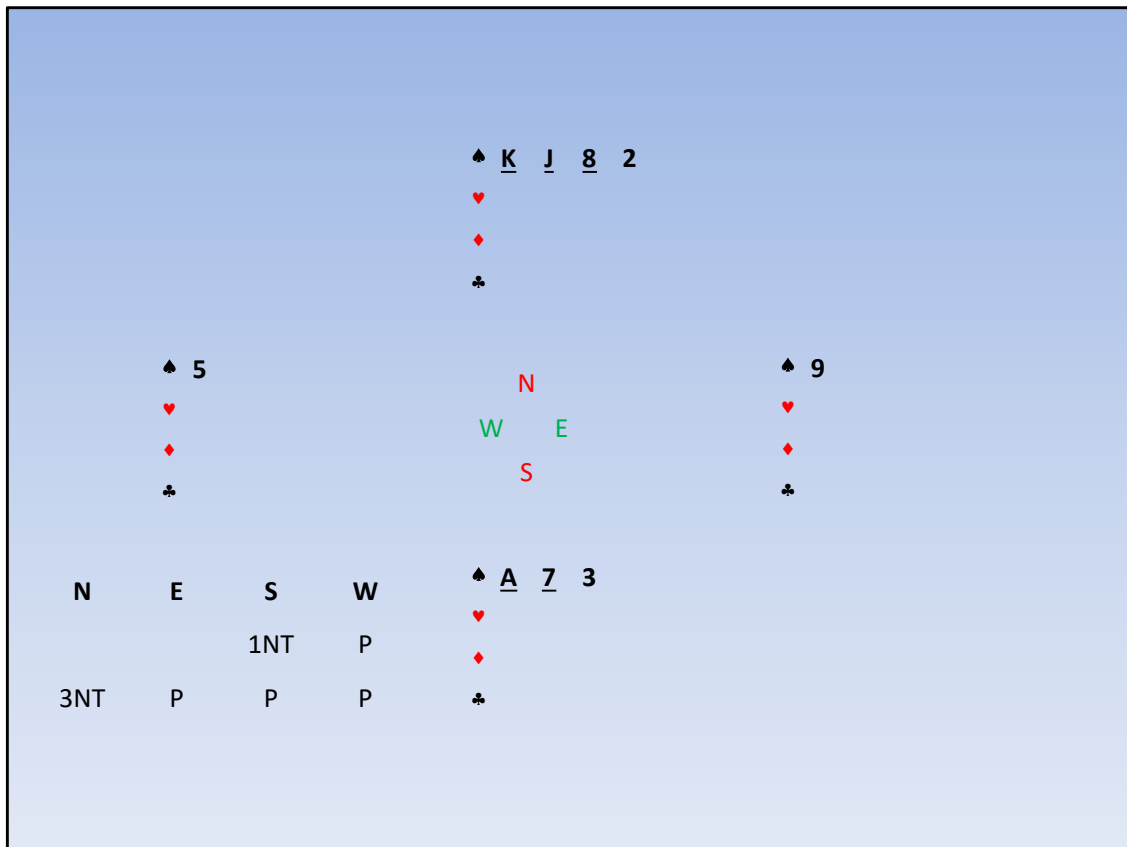
The Rule of Eleven

- If an opening lead is the fourth highest card from a four card or longer suit then the number of higher cards in the other three hands is 11 minus the value of the card led
- Applies particularly to the opening lead against NT contracts, but beware an opening lead from the only unbid suit

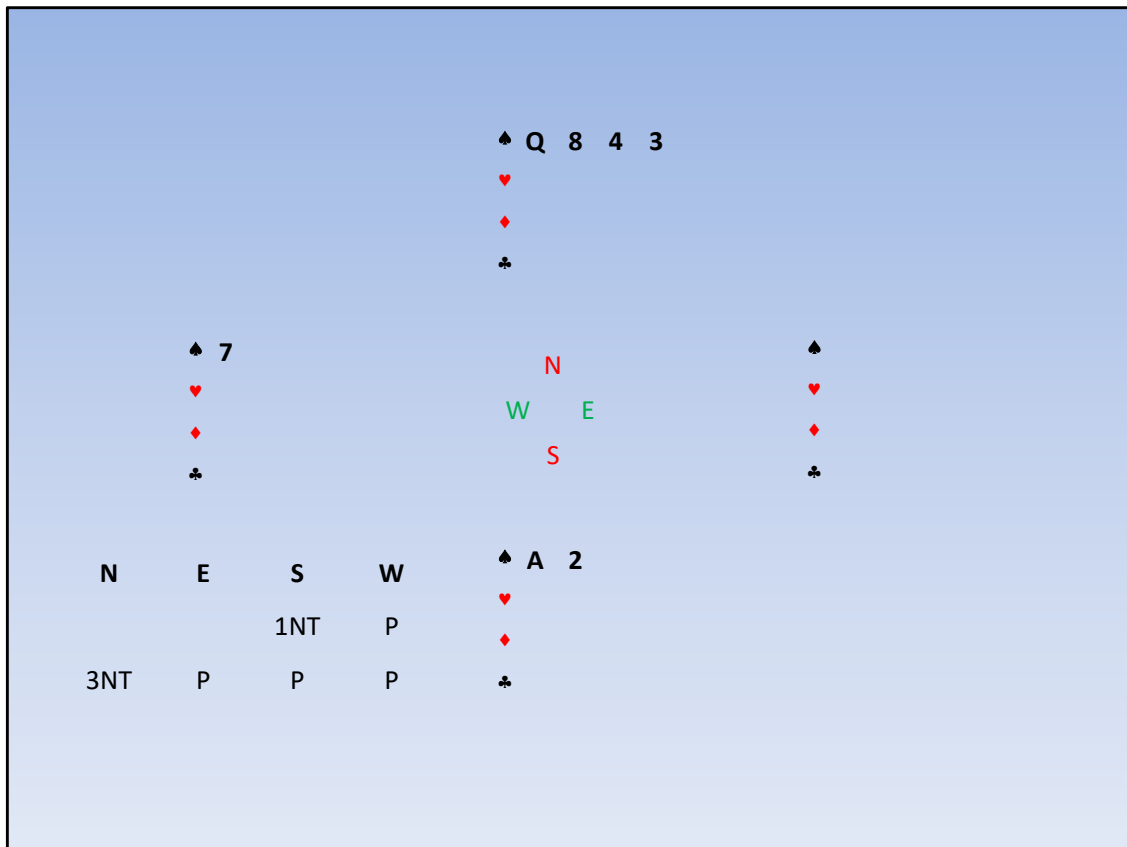
Here's how this works: the value of any card in a suit ranges from 2 to 14 (the Ace). There is no card with a value of 1. Deducting the value of the card led from 14 gives the number of higher cards in all four hands. When the lead is fourth highest, three of those cards are held by the player making the lead. This leaves (11 minus the value of the card led) cards in the remaining three hands. It's useful in NT contracts but much less so in suit contracts where short suit leads and leads from weak suits, seeking to avoid leading away from potential trick-winning honours, are much commoner.



How many spade tricks can you be sure of making if the opening lead is fourth highest?

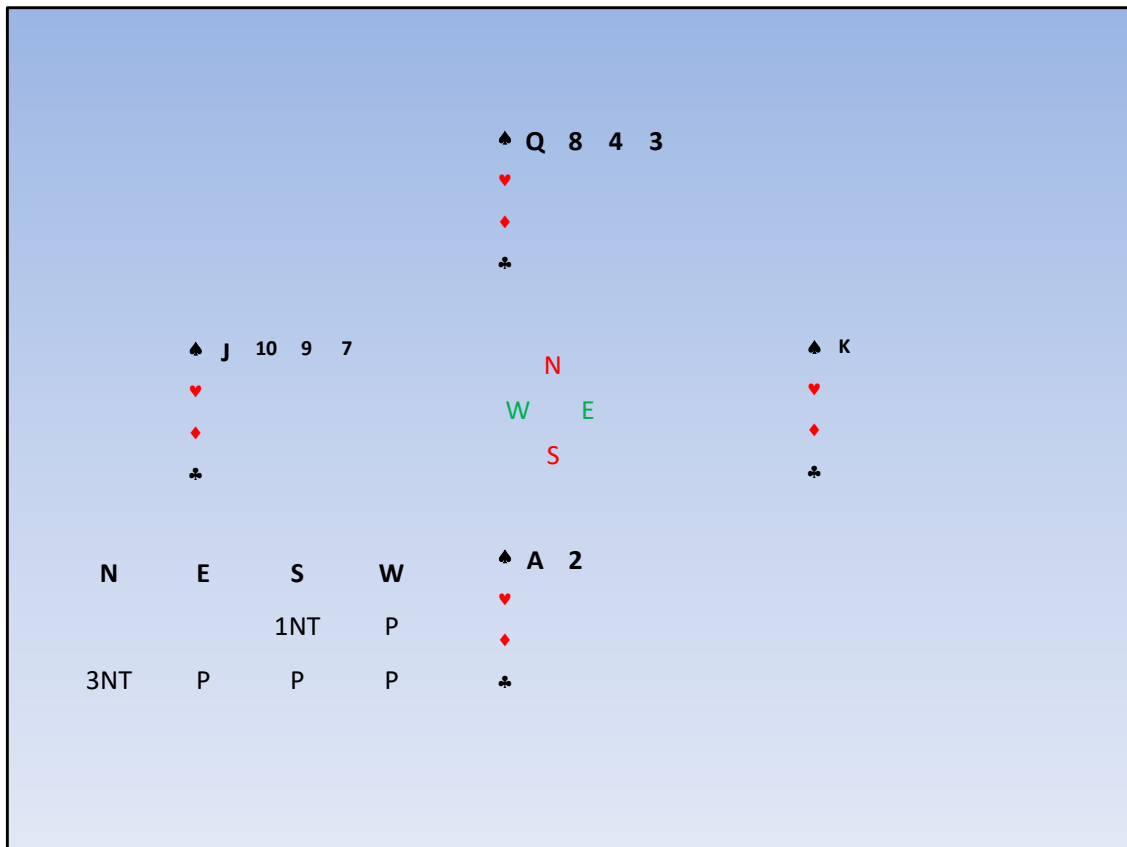


The Rule of Eleven shows that there are six cards in the N, E and S hands which are higher than the 5. NS hold 5 of these so the 9 is East's only higher spade. Win this trick with the A and lead towards dummy covering West's card as simply as possible. Repeat the finesse to make four spade tricks.

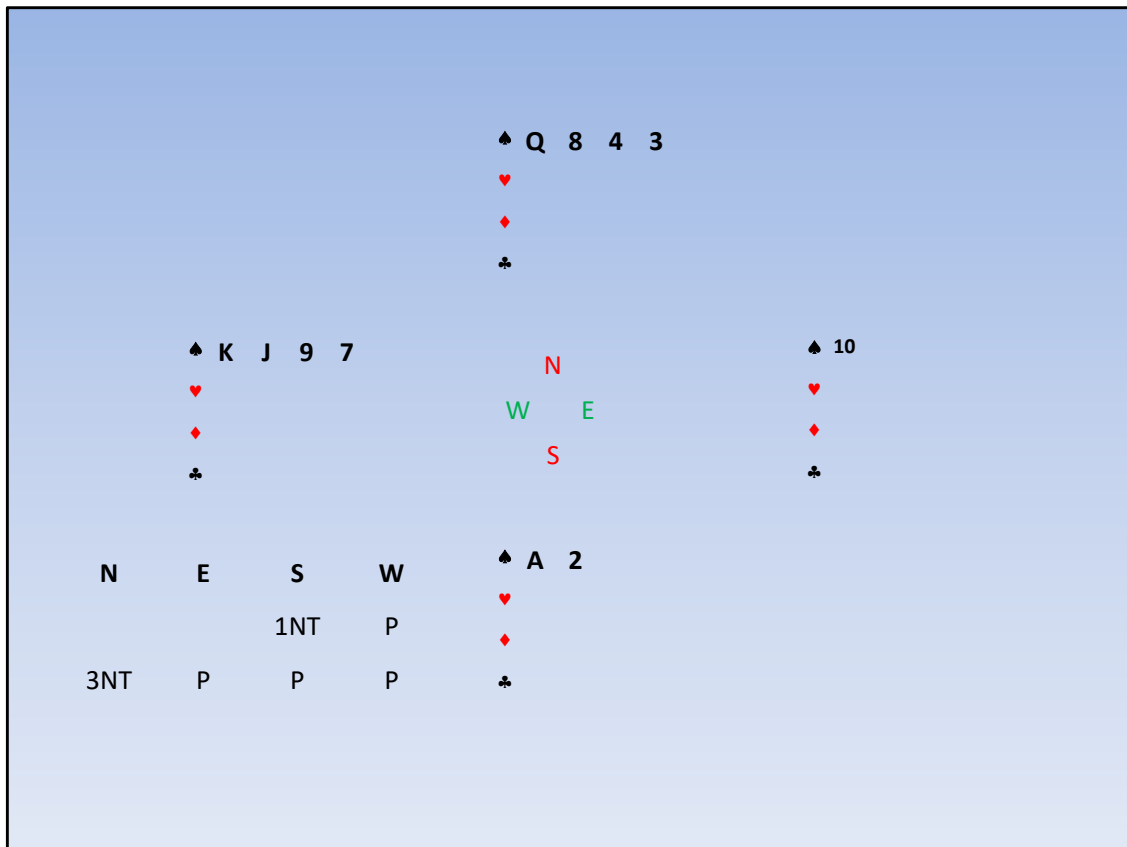


Should you play the Q or a small spade on this opening lead?

This hand has an additional level of subtlety. We know that there are four cards higher than the 7 in the N, E and S hands. We can see three of those (A, Q, 8). The remaining higher cards are K, J, 10 and 9. West holds three of these cards and East holds one. So....

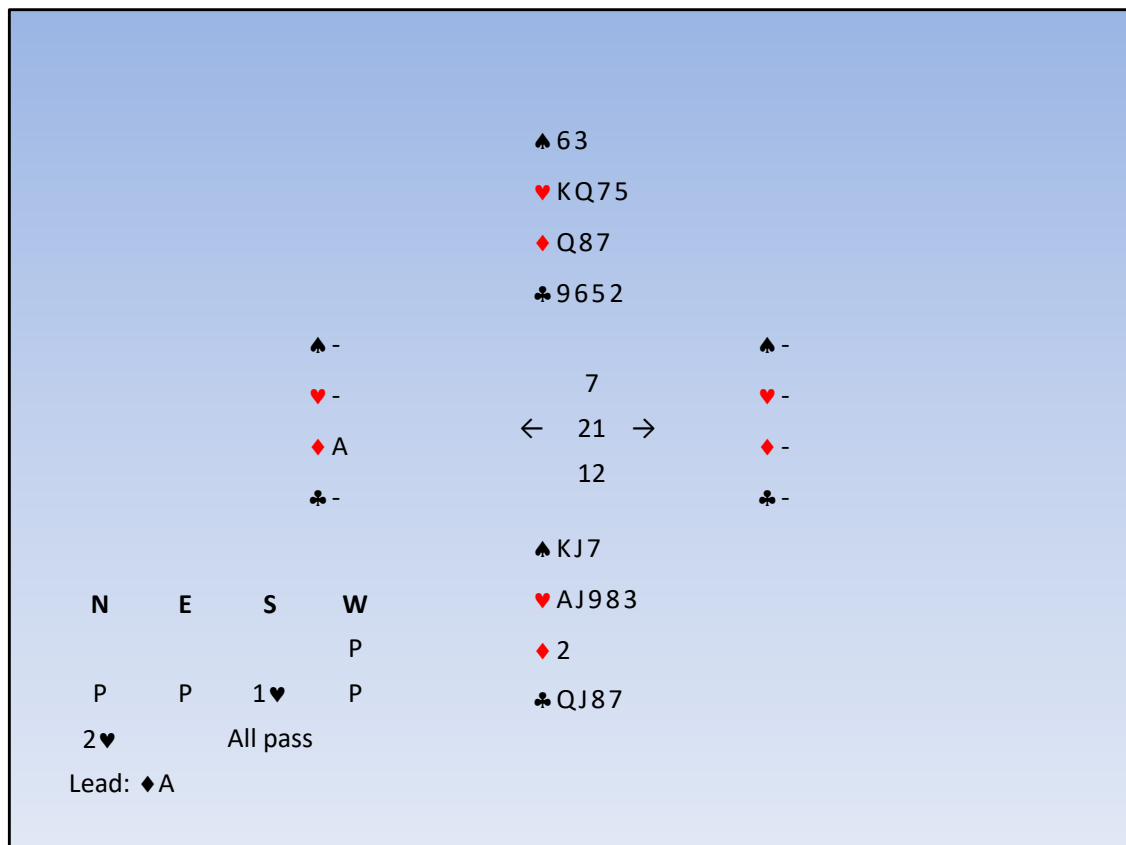


If East holds the K then West started with J,10,9,7(..). With that holding West would lead the J.

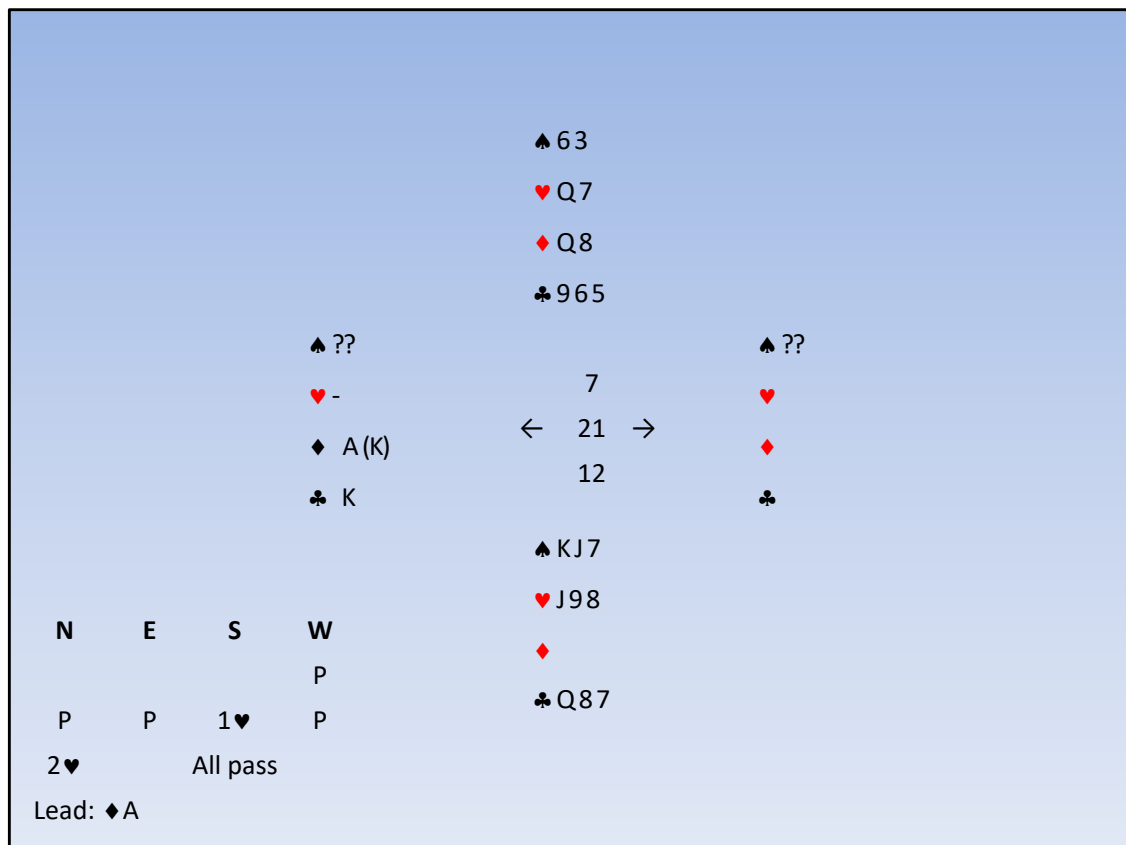


West must, therefore, hold the K and the correct play is the Q from dummy.

Placing missing high cards



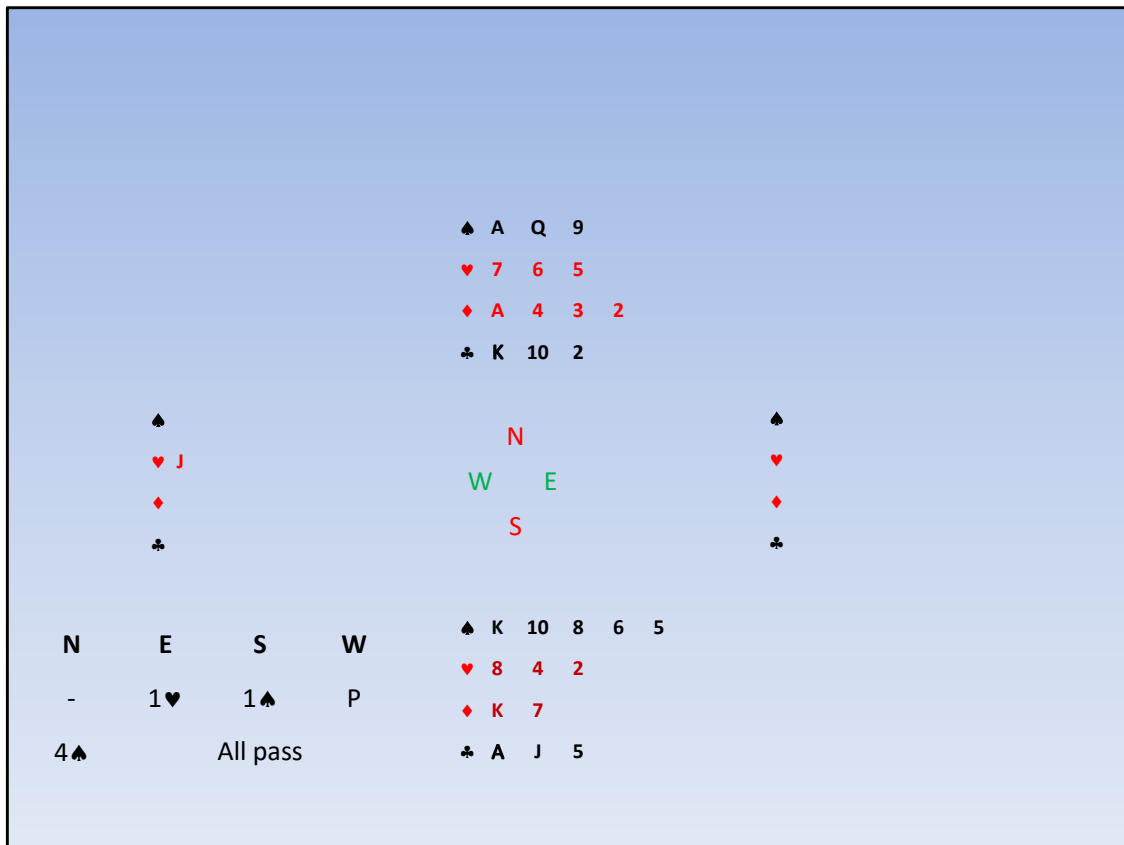
Let's return to the hand we saw earlier. We have no trump losers, one diamond loser and probably two losers in clubs. (there might be three losers if the suit breaks badly). We have a guess in spades. Assuming we play a small spade from dummy should we play the K or J from the South hand? That decision is best left until we have collected some evidence. Firstly, West is likely to hold the K of diamonds as it would be unusual to lead an unsupported A - it's too likely to give a trick away. At trick two West switches to a heart and trumps are drawn in two rounds ending in dummy. A small club is led from dummy and the J loses to West's K.



We've now arrived at this position. Assuming that we're correct about the diamond position, West has now shown 10 points. If either of the spade honours was in the West hand that would make at least 12 points, in which case West would have opened the bidding. East has AQ of spades and the correct play is to lead a small spade from dummy and insert the J if East plays small.

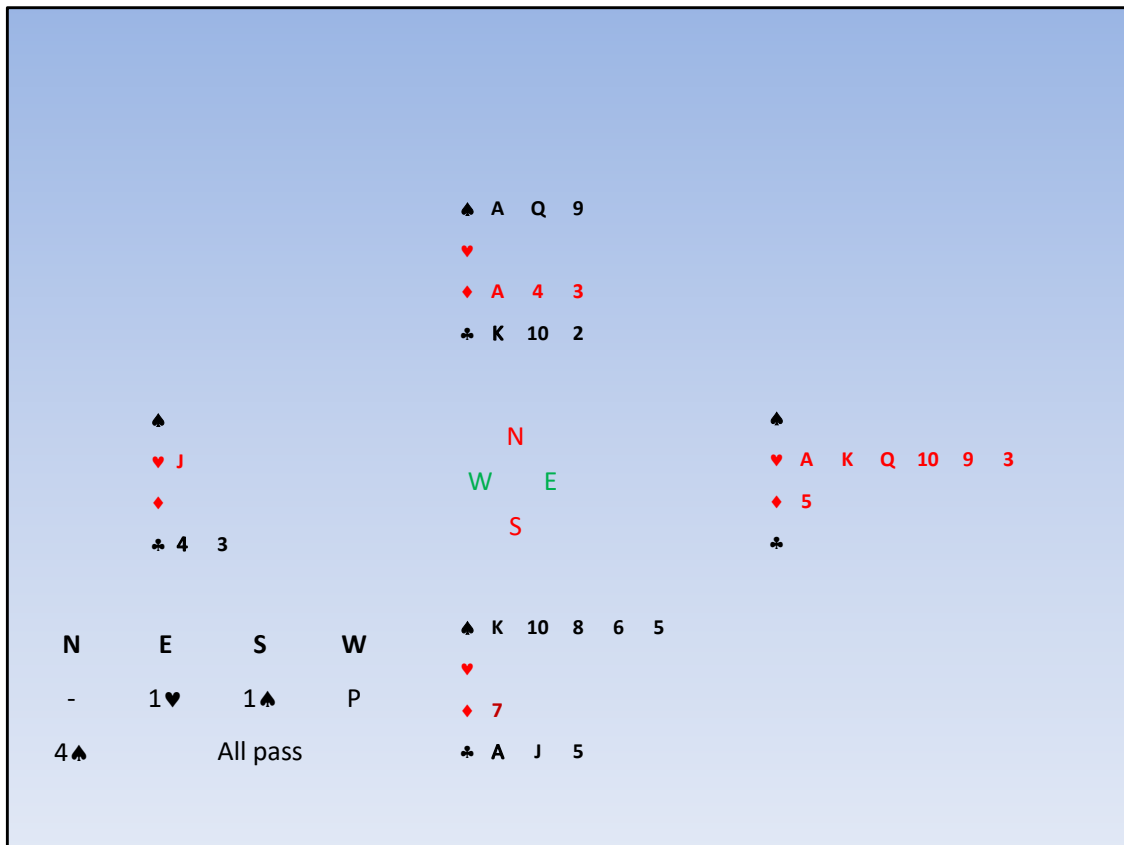
Discovery play

Discovery plays aim to determine the shape of a defender's hand by analysing the auction and counting cards played including, especially, the discards made by either defender.



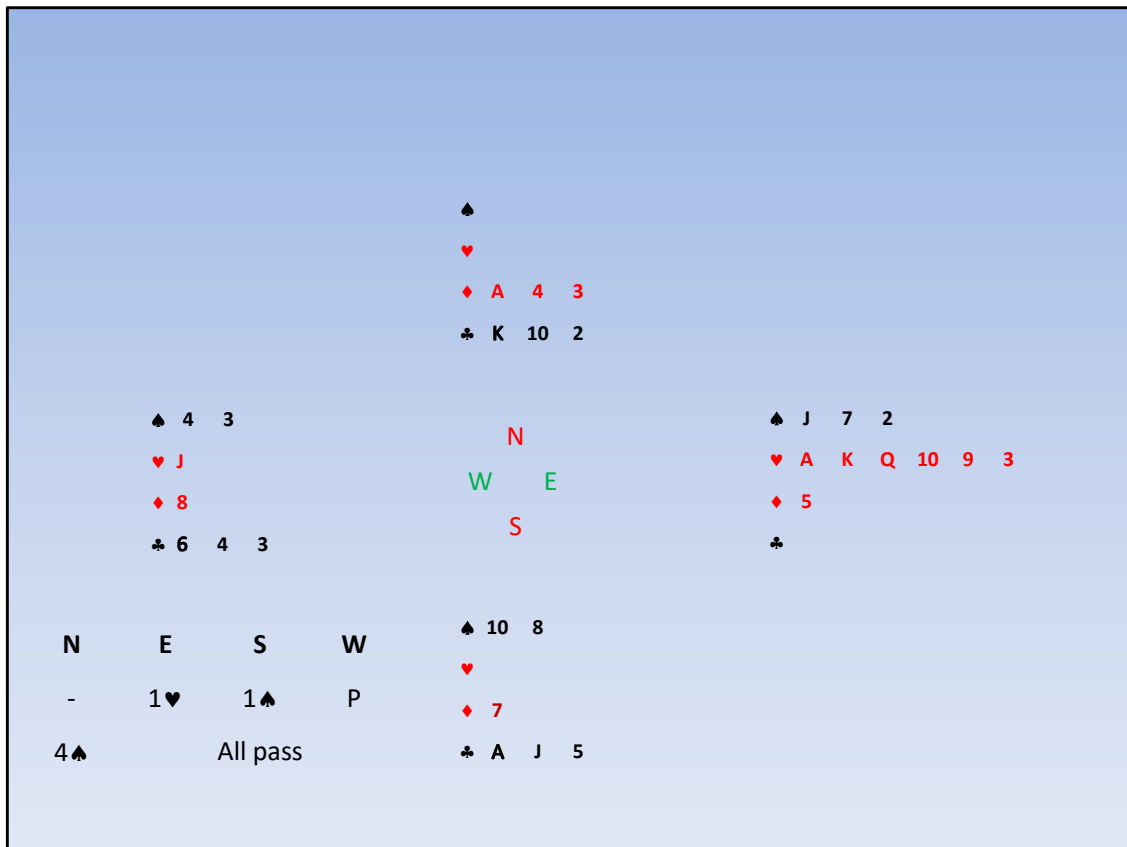
You may think that South's raise to 4 spades is a little bold but remember that South was obliged to bid after North's double and would have done so with no points and perhaps only four spades.

West leads the J of hearts. East cashes three rounds of hearts and switches to a small diamond won by declarer's K.

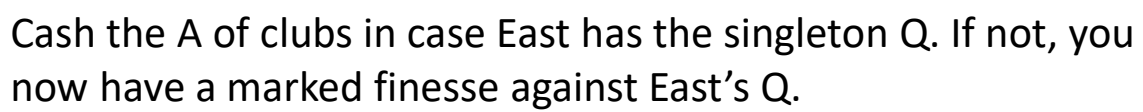


In order to make our contract we need to make three club tricks. Can we locate the Q of clubs?

Draw trumps. East has three. We now know about 10 of East's cards – 3 spades, 6 hearts and 1 diamond.



Play a diamond to the A and ruff a diamond. East follows to both of these tricks. East has, at most, one club.



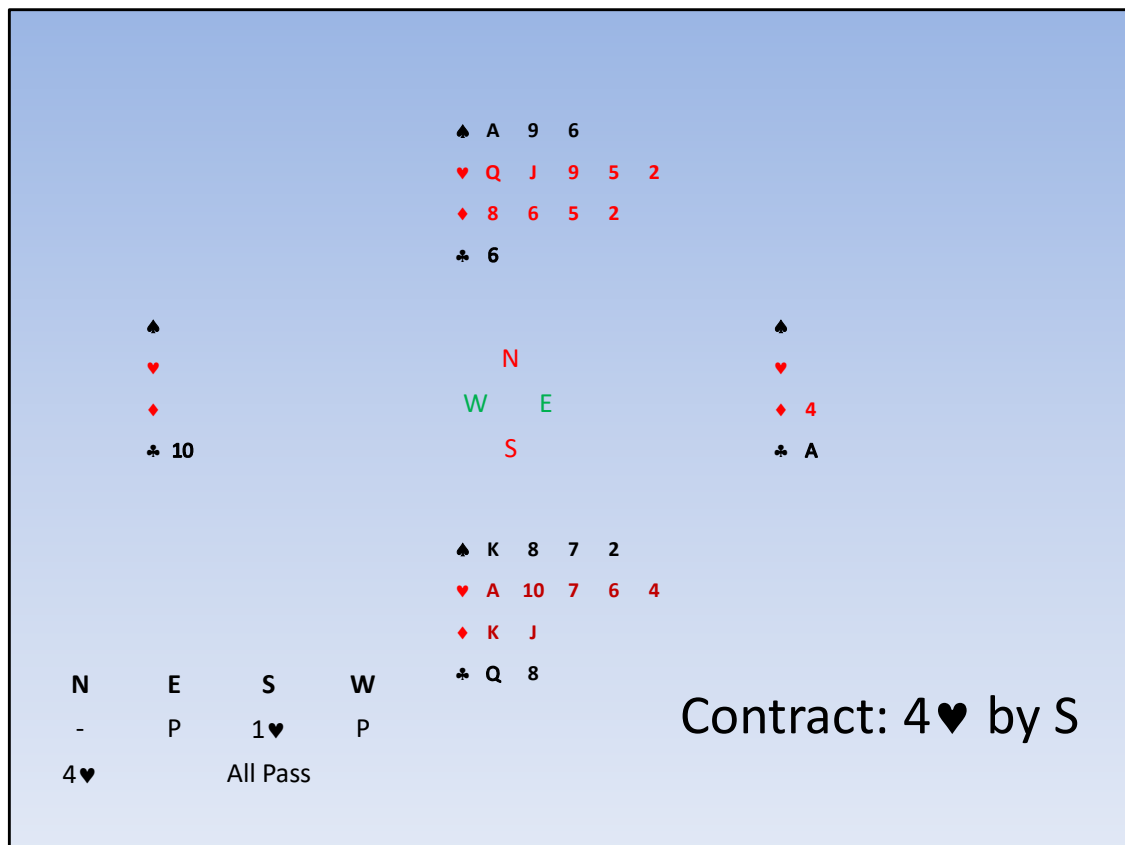
				♠ A Q 9 ♥ 7 6 5 ♦ A 4 3 2 ♣ K 10 2			
				N W E S			
♠ 4 3 ♥ J ♦ J 10 9 8 ♣ Q 8 7 6 4 3				♠ J 7 2 ♥ A K Q 10 9 3 ♦ Q 6 5 ♣ 9			
N	E	S	W	♠ K 10 8 6 5 ♥ 8 4 2 ♦ K 7 ♣ A J 5			
-	1♥	1♠	P				
4♠	All pass						

Here is the full hand.

Card placing by Assumption

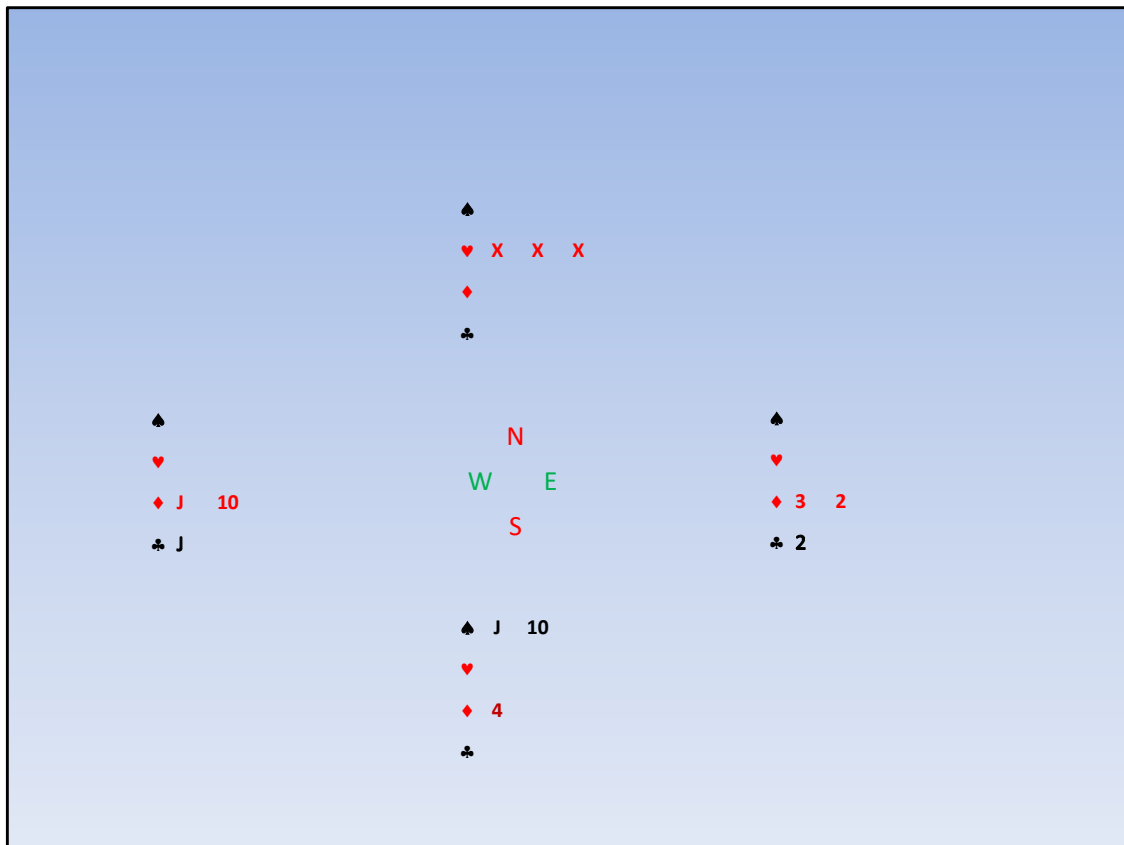
Card placing by assumption

- If a contract can only be made if a certain card is in a certain hand then assume that it is there and act accordingly.



The diamond switch forces us to make a guess in that suit much earlier than we would have liked. There is one club loser, one spade loser and at least one diamond loser. In order to make this contract we need a correct guess in diamonds and we must avoid losing a trump trick. In trumps the options are to play for a singleton K in either hand or to finesse against East. The odds favour the finesse. We will therefore **assume** that East holds the K of hearts. We don't have any evidence to support that assumption but we need it to be so in order to give us the best chance of making the contract. Having made that assumption we can partially reconstruct East's hand. We know that East has AJ of clubs. West would have led the J from J 10 x We have assumed that East has the K of hearts. That's 8 HCPs so far. East cannot hold the A of diamonds as that would be 12 HCPs and East would have opened. We should play the J hoping East has the Q. If West started with AQ of diamonds we can never make the contract anyway.

Help your partner



You are sitting East. Holding these last three cards you may have lost interest in the hand but you have an important contribution to make. West is an excellent card counter and knows that there is only one other club outstanding but doesn't know whether it's held by S or E. When South leads the J of spades West can safely discard the J of diamonds. East, who has also counted the club suit correctly, knows that if South's last card is the J of clubs then the defence can never take another trick. To have any chance, East must assume that declarer's last card will be a diamond. That means that after this trick West will hold one club and one diamond. If East discards a small diamond West has no way of knowing whether that's from xxx of diamonds, which would leave South with a small club or from xx of diamonds which would leave South with a small diamond. That would mean that West would have to make a guess at trick 12 when South leads the 10 of spades. If, however, East discards the 2 of clubs on the J of spades West knows that South's last card must be a small diamond and can safely discard the J of clubs on the 10 of spades.



The End

I bet you were looking forward to this slide.

Hands and Auctions

Some of these auctions and opening leads look a bit contrived but they provide the evidence needed for your analysis of the hands.

Board 1: Dealer North: Love
all

W

N

E

S

1NT

P

3NT

All Pass

Contract: 3NT by N Lead: ♠7

Board 1: Dealer North: Love all

♠ 8 4 2

♥ J 7 3

♦ A Q

♣ A J 7 4 2

♠ 6

♥ A 9 6 5

♦ 9 7 6 5 4 3

♣ 8 5

♠ K J 9 7 3

♥ K Q 2

♦ 10 8

♣ Q 10 9

♠ A Q 10 5

♥ 10 8 4

♦ K J 2

♣ K 6 3

N

W E

S

W N E S

1NT P 3NT

All Pass

Contract: 3NT by N

Lead: ♠7

Board 2: Dealer East: NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
---	---	---	---

		P	P
--	--	---	---

1NT	P	2♥	
-----	---	----	--

3♠		4♠	
----	--	----	--

Contract: 4♠ by W Lead: ♥J

Board 2: Dealer East: NS vulnerable

				♠ 6			
				♥ J 10 9 6 3			
				♦ Q 9 6			
				♣ K J 10 2			
					N		♠ A Q 9 7 4
					W E		♥ 2
					S		♦ K 10 2
							♣ 9 8 6 5
				♠ 10 5			
				♥ A K 8 7			
				♦ 8 5 4 3			
				♣ A 7 4			
W	N	E	S				Contract: 4♠ by W
		P	P				Lead: ♥J
1NT	P	2♥					
3♠		4♠					

Board 3: Dealer South: EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
			3♥
Dbl	P	6NT	P
P		P	

Contract: 6NT by E Lead: ♥K

Board 3: Dealer South: EW vulnerable

				♠ 6 4 3 2							
				♥ 10							
				♦ 8 6 4 3 2							
				♣ Q 6 5							
					N						
				W	E						
					S						
				♠ K Q 10							
				♥ 8 2							
				♦ A 9 7							
				♣ A J 9 3 2							
					♠ A J 8						
					♥ A 9 3						
					♦ K Q J						
					♣ K J 8 7						
W	N	E	S	♠ 9 7 5							
			3♥	♥ K Q J 7 6 5 4							
				♦ 10 5							
				♣ 4							
Dbf	P	6NT	P								
P		P									
				Contract: 6NT by E							
				Lead: ♥K							

Board 4: Dealer West: All vulnerable

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			
Contract: 2♠ by S Lead: ♥K			

Board 4: Dealer West: All vulnerable

♠ 8 5

♥ K Q 10

♦ A 7 6 2

♣ Q 8 3 2

N

W E

S

♠ 3 2

♥ A 8 7 6

♦ Q 10 8

♣ A 9 5 4

♠ K 10 9 6

♥ J 5 4

♦ K 5 4 3

♣ 7 6

♠ A Q J 7 4

♥ 9 3 2

♦ J 9

♣ K J 10

Contract: 2♠ by S

Lead: ♥K

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Board 5: Dealer North: NS vulnerable

W	N	E	S
	1NT	Pass	Pass
2♥		All Pass	
Contract: 2♥ by W		Lead: ♦J	

Board 5: Dealer North: NS vulnerable

				♠ A J 10 8 2				
				♥ Q 8 7				
				♦ J 10 8				
				♣ A J				
					N			
♠ 9	♥ A J 10 9 6 4	♦ A K 3	♣ 9 4 2	W	E	♠ Q 7 6 4 3	♥ K 5	♦ 9 6 2
					S	♣ Q 6 5		
W	N	E	S	♠ K 5				
	1NT	Pass	Pass	♥ 3 2				
2♥		All Pass		♦ Q 7 5 4				
				♣ K 10 8 7 3	Contract: 2♥ by W Lead: ♦J			

Board 6: Dealer East: EW vulnerable

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠

Contract: 4♠ by S Lead: ♣A

Board 6: Dealer East: EW vulnerable

♠ A J 8 4
♥ A K 3
♦ Q 10 9 5
♣ Q 4

♠ 6 5 2
♥ 8 6 5 2
♦ 8 7 3 2
♣ A 9

N
W E
S

♠ K
♥ J 10 9 7
♦ A J 6
♣ K J 10 8 5

♠ Q 10 9 7 3
♥ Q 4
♦ K 4
♣ 7 6 3 2

W	N	E	S
		1♣	Pass
Pass	Dbl	Pass	1♠
Pass	1♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

Contract: 4♠ by S
Lead: ♣A

Board 7: Dealer South: All vulnerable

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♠	
All Pass			

This slide doesn't specify an opening lead as that's the question to be resolved.

Board 7: Dealer South: All vulnerable

♠ A J 10 8 2		♠ 9 4 3
♥ 3		♥ A 9 8 6 2
♦ A 8 4		♦ 10
♣ K J 6 4		♣ A 9 5 2

W	N	E	S
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
3♣	Pass	4♠	
	All Pass		

Contract: 4♠ by W
Lead: ♣A

Board 8: Dealer West: Love all

W	N	E	S
1NT	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥		

All Pass

Contract: 4♥ by N Lead: ♠7

Board 8: Dealer West: Love all

				♠ 8 4 ♥ A K J 10 5 3 ♦ 5 2 ♣ K J 9			
				♠ 9 7 6 5 ♥ 7 ♦ J 9 8 7 ♣ Q 7 4 3			
				♠ A K Q 2 ♥ 9 2 ♦ A 10 6 4 ♣ 10 8 5			
				♠ J 10 3 ♥ Q 8 6 2 ♦ K Q 3 ♣ A 6 2			
				N W E S			
W	N	E	S	Contract: 4♥ by N			
1NT	2♥	Pass	3♥	Lead: ♠7			
Pass	4♥						
				All Pass			

This hand has been slightly modified from Tuesday's version to avoid East holding an obvious diamond lead.