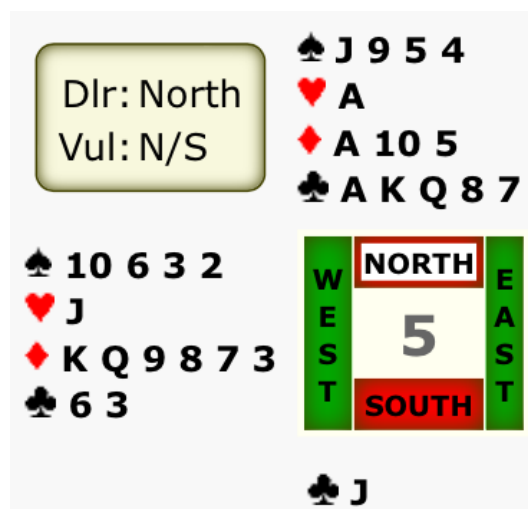


May 2026 Hand of the Week 98: The power of 2



Sitting North you open 1♣ and East overcalls 4♥ showing an 8 card suit. South and West pass, holding 3 Aces it looks likely we can take this off so I doubled, the main risk is East having a club void.

Partner leads J♣:



The A♣ holds, declarer playing 2♣.

You should win the 3 Aces but need a 4th trick to defeat the contract.

There is no danger in continuing clubs at this point, and the K♣, which is ruffed by declarer.

Declarer now play 6♦, to partners 2♦ and dummy's K♦

Should you play the A♦ or duck?

Declarer started with 8 hearts, a singleton club and a least 1 diamond, so 3 of their cards are unknown at this point. They will be making 7 hearts, so need 3 other winners, which will have to come from diamonds and spades- from this play they are looking to make 2 spades and a diamond.

The risk in taking the A♦ at this point is that declarer could win a spade and then throw spade losers on the established diamonds. So you might be better ducking 1 round to break communication, in the hope that declarer only has 2 diamonds.

What is the best play?

Dir: North
Vul: N/S

♠ J 9 5 4
♥ A
♦ A 10 5
♣ A K Q 8 7

Optimum
EW 4Hx
+100

♠ 10 6 3 2
♥ J
♦ K Q 9 8 7 3
♣ 6 3

WEST NORTH EAST
5 SOUTH

♠ A K 7
♥ K Q 10 8 7 6 4 3
♦ 6
♣ 2

18
6 12
4

♠ Q 8
♥ 9 5 2
♦ J 4 2
♣ J 10 9 5 4

	♣	♦	♥	♠	N
N	10	6	4	6	7
S	10	6	4	6	7
E	2	6	9	4	5
W	3	6	9	4	5

The clue here was partners 2♦. The usual practice is to show count on declarers lead, and play high-low with an even number of cards and low-high with an odd number.

We can see 6 diamonds on table and 3 in hand leaving 4. After declarer leads a diamond and partner follows the suit is either breaking 2-2 or 3-1.

With a doubleton partner would play a high diamond first, as they played the 2 there are no lower cards so they must have either a singleton or a tripleton.

It is very likely declarer has a singleton and partner a tripleton- the reason for this is that if declarer had 9 card fit in diamonds there is a good chance one defender would have a singleton, and declarer would want to avoid a ruff in defence. It is very likely that declarer would try and draw trumps before playing the diamonds.

Note also that if declarer started with J and another diamond they should have lead the J♦ first to unblock the suit.

As the cards lie, with no entries to table it is a good play from declarer to play a diamond earlier and put the defence 'on guess' as soon as possible. The situation would be particularly difficult if South held the A♦ as there would be no opportunity to get a count from partner before having to decide whether to play the A or not.

The best play from North is to assume declarer tried to slip a singleton through, and take A♦. We can now take declarers shape as 3-8-1-1 and safely switch to a spade. Again, partner must have a spade honour or we cannot defeat the contract.