

Here is a hand from the national pairs myself and Martin played a couple of weeks ago

Partner opens 1♠, East overcalls 2♦, and I bid 2♥

You should have sufficient points for game- partner has shown with 5 good spades of more likely 6. Should you go straight to 4♠ or is there a better way?

3♥ - would show a 3 card heart suit, looking for 4♥ if partner holds a 5 card suit

3NT- 5 spades, and a diamond stop, to play

<p>D</p> <p>29</p>	<p>N m27evans</p> <p>♠ K1097652</p> <p>♥ 3</p> <p>♦ K108</p> <p>♣ A8</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>1♠</td> <td>2♦</td> <td>2♥</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>2♠</td> <td>P</td> <td>3♦</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>3♠</td> <td>P</td> <td>4♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S		1♠	2♦	2♥	P	2♠	P	3♦	P	3♠	P	4♠	P	P	P	
W	N	E	S																			
	1♠	2♦	2♥																			
P	2♠	P	3♦																			
P	3♠	P	4♠																			
P	P	P																				
<p>W richflash</p>	<p>♣ 6</p>	<p>E glynme</p>																				
	<p>S med029</p> <p>♠ AJ</p> <p>♥ AQJ86</p> <p>♦ 973</p> <p>♣ J109</p>	<p>4♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0</p>																				

The preferred play holding 9 trumps is to play for a 2-2 which occurs 52% of the time. North wins A♣ plays 2 rounds of spades with East showing Qxx.

Now what? The defence have established a club winner and a spade winner. The risk is that you get a diamond lead through declarers King. West is therefore the danger hand and you should try and keep East on lead.

So what is the best way to play the hearts? The preferred play is the A♥ and then play a ruffing finesse against East- after the Q♥ is played, ruff if West covers, otherwise throw your club loser. However, have you spotted the problem with this play!

Here is the full hand:

<div>D</div> <div>29</div>	N m27evans		W	N	E	S
	♠ K1097652			1♠	2♦	2♥
	♥ 3		P	2♠	P	3♦
W richflash	♦ K108		P	3♠	P	4♠
	♣ A8		P	P	P	
			E glynme			
			♠ Q43			
			♥ K97			
			♦ AQJ64			
			♣ 63			
	S med029					
	♠ AJ					
		♥ AQJ86				
		♦ 973				
		♣ J109				
			4♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0			

Lets imagine the play proceeds as described, you will end up in this situation after East on lead after they win the K♥, and EW have won 1 trick so far:

<div>D</div> <div>29</div>	N m27evans		W	N	E	S
	♠ 109765			1♠	2♦	2♥
	♥		P	2♠	P	3♦
W richflash	♦ K108		P	3♠	P	4♠
	♣		P	P	P	
			E glynme			
			♠ Q			
			♥ 97			
			♦ AQJ64			
			♣ 3			
	S med029					
	♠					
		♥ J86				
		♦ 973				
		♣ J10				
			4♠ N NS: 3 EW: 0			

East can now exit with a club- declarer can throw a diamond on West's K♣, but then West can then lead a diamond, or declarer can ruff a club but then has to lead away from their diamonds.

Although it looks like a riskier play, the better option is to finesse the heart, throwing the club and the second round, and returning to hand with a club ruff- when East is then put in with Q♠ their safe exit card has been removed. They can cash their K♥, on which declarer should throw a diamond, and they are end played in diamonds. There was a clue from the lead, East has shown a long diamond suit from the bidding, and also has 3 spades. The 6♣ is likely to be high from a doubleton.