

# Board of the Week 34

By Dick Chapman

Here's an unusual hand for you to bid and play:

♠AKJ10975 ♥AKQ972 ♦J ♣—

Generally, the wisdom is don't open a two-suiter with 2 clubs, but here you decided to do that. Partner calls 2 diamonds, waiting. You bid 2 spades, partner calls 3 clubs, natural. Your call?

(Music...dum de dum...)

Did you call 6 hearts? Good enough. You were going there anyway, weren't you? Yes, you might have just missed a grand slam. Slower might have been better, but here you are.

Now hold this:

♠43 ♥J84 ♦862 ♣AQ875

After 6 hearts, what is your call?

(More music)

Partner rates to be 6-5 or 6-6, and your jack of hearts suggests a filler that you don't have in spades. If partner's spades are solid, they will be a way to discard all those losers you see. So...you pass 6 hearts.

Ok, now to the play. Here you are, sitting South and getting the ace of diamonds and a second diamond. Plan the play from here:

	♠43 ♥J84 ♦862 ♣AQ875	
♠ ♥ ♦AK ♣	V: N D: S	♠ ♥ ♦54 ♣
	♠AK10975 ♥AKQ972 ♦J ♣—	

This looks easy, doesn't it? You ruff the second diamond, play two spades (everyone follows), ruff a spade high (low if West discards on the third one), draw trump, and claim.

Do you see the flaw in this plan?

I will stop here and let you think about it a short while. There indeed is a major flaw, and I will tell you:

- The board was played 15 times
- Only one declarer got it right.
- It's not a difficult solution

Study the hand before you read further. Consider a much, much better plan to make 12 tricks. After you make your plan, read the next column.

Try this: play the ace of hearts at trick 3. Oops, West discards a diamond. Now how do you play the hand?

(Music, third verse). Seriously, you should think these problems through rather than reading the solution. When you actually try to solve them (like you would at the table), your bridge enjoyment will be higher.

Ready? Play two spades, ruff a spade with the jack in dummy, then play on hearts by taking the marked finesse against East's 10. You have the 8 in dummy, East holds 1065, and you hold KQ972. If East doesn't cover, return to hand with a club ruff, draw the final two trump, and claim. Here's the full deal:

	♠43 ♥J84 ♦862 ♣AQ875	
♠Q86 ♥— ♦AKQ3 ♣K109642	V: N D: S	♠J2 ♥10653 ♦109754 ♣J3
	♠AK10975 ♥AKQ972 ♦J ♣—	

If you go to dummy with the spade ruff before you test the hearts, you have risked everything on one shot. No sane bridge player would finesse hearts when in dummy with a spade ruff and no idea of the heart distribution (you would play for the drop of the jack).

The likelihood of a 4-0 split in trump is less than 10%, but that's not zero. The important thing is this: it cost nothing to find out. And once you find out, you can still bring in the contract. If West holds four hearts, you ruff the third spade low, play the jack of hearts, return to hand with a club ruff, and draw the final two trump with KQ, and claim. If East holds four hearts, you play as described above: ruff a spade with the jack then take the finesse against East's 10.

Notice what happens if you draw all the trump: you lose a spade. Notice what happens if you draw two trump then ruff a spade high: you don't have a trump in dummy to take the marked finesse. You must draw one and only one trump by leading the ace from your hand. If the spades divide 3-1 or 2-2, anyone can make the contract: ruff the third spade high, draw the rest of the trump, and claim. It's only the 4-0 split that will give you a problem.

Remember this board, because you will see it when you take my Summer Symposium "What Could Go Wrong?" Maybe summer of 2024? In today's board, "what could go wrong?" is a 4-0 split in trump. If you find out at trick 3, the rest of the board should be easy. Notice you still need spades to divide 3-2, but you got that. Notice also that 6 spades doesn't make.

Congratulations to Frank S. for getting it right.