

Board of the Week 72

By Dick Chapman

This week's board is not difficult enough to make Eddie Kantar's "Take All Your Chances" books, but still has some small instructional value. This was played in the weekly BBO free 8 board tournament (with robots):

	♠AQ6 ♥Q54 ♦J107 ♣AJ84		
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣		♠ ♥ ♦ ♣	
	♠1073 ♥AK96 ♦AKQ64 ♣K		
West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	6NT
All pass			

South could have responded 1 diamond but the auction will still end in 6NT. The opening lead should be and was a passive diamond. Plan the play from here.

You have 11 easy tricks, so must determine where the 12th will emerge. The choice is a spade finesse or making the hearts be 3-3 in opponents' hands. Which first? Think a second before reading further.

Observe that if the hearts don't break 3-3 and you lose the spade finesse, you are down immediately on another heart lead. But if the hearts are still intact and the spade finesse fails, you can fall back on finding the 3-3 heart break. So you must tackle spades first. And if the finesse fails and hearts are not 3-3, do you see a third (very, very small) shot to make?

The jack of spades might fall in two leads. In the tournament, the finesse worked and the hearts were 3-3, so I made an overtrick for a 96% on the board:

	♠AQ6 ♥Q54 ♦J107 ♣AJ84	
♠K952 ♥J83 ♦952 ♣975		♠J84 ♥1072 ♦83 ♣Q10632
	♠1073 ♥AK96 ♦AKQ64 ♣K	

In typical BBO fashion, only 4 pairs were in slam and only 2 of those brought in 13 tricks. The bulk of the field was in 3NT making 12 or 13 tricks. I wish I had some of those random BBO players as opponents at our club!

Observe the slam will still make if the finesse is working and hearts are not 3-3:

	♠AQ6 ♥Q54 ♦J107 ♣AJ84	
♠K952 ♥J8 ♦952 ♣975		♠J84 ♥10732 ♦83 ♣Q10632
	♠1073 ♥AK96 ♦AKQ64 ♣K	

Or will work in this case, where the finesse fails but hearts are 3-3:

	♠AQ6 ♥Q54 ♦J107 ♣AJ84	
♠J952 ♥J83 ♦952 ♣975		♠K84 ♥1072 ♦83 ♣Q10632
	♠1073 ♥AK96 ♦AKQ64 ♣K	

Here is the third way to make, where the hearts are 4-2 and the finesse fails, but the spade jack is happily dropping on your ace:

	♠AQ6 ♥Q54 ♦J107 ♣AJ84	
♠98542 ♥82 ♦952 ♣975		♠KJ ♥J1073 ♦83 ♣Q10632
	♠1073 ♥AK96 ♦AKQ64 ♣K	

There is still a fourth position where you can prevail:

	♠AQ6 ♥Q54 ♦J107 ♣AJ84	
♠9854 ♥J2 ♦952 ♣975		♠KJ2 ♥10873 ♦83 ♣Q10632
	♠1073 ♥AK96 ♦AKQ64 ♣K	

Here you see the heart jack fall and you have lost the spade finesse. Do you play the hearts to be 3-3 or do you finesse the 10 on the way back? This subset of restricted choice is a decision that experts seem to make more accurately than intermediate writers like me.

See you at the club, where the players are far better than your run-of-the-mill field on BBO. And where we get cake when there is a birthday.