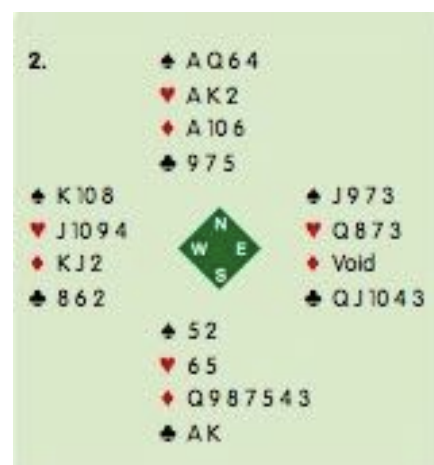


You are declarer in 5♣ after West and East have competed in spades. West leads the ♠K. How do you plan the play? (Trumps are 2-2).

Four tricks in diamonds will give you enough tricks but there is a potential problem. If, while establishing the diamonds, you happen to lose a trick to East, a heart return through your king could prove awkward. The best way round this is by simply ducking the lead and pitching a diamond on the ♠A at the second trick. (If the defenders switch at trick two you have to engineer this yourself.) Take two top trumps from the closed hand (drawing them all as it happens) and then play the ♦A and then low to the king. If all follow you establish the suit with a ruff and have a trump entry for the two long diamonds. If diamonds are 4-1 then you play for the ♥A to be onside, when ♥K and a ruff in dummy will give you eleven tricks.



You are declarer in 6♦ and West leads the ♥J. How do you plan the play?

The play might seem straightforward, for if declarer has to lose a diamond, then the spade finesse needs to be right, while if the king of trumps falls under the ace then there are twelve guaranteed tricks. What is important though is to establish whether or not there is a spade loser because if there isn't you can guarantee not to lose two trumps by playing low from hand and covering whatever West plays. Of course if West shows out you rise with the ace and lead back towards the queen. So win the opening lead, play a club to hand and see whether the spade finesse works.