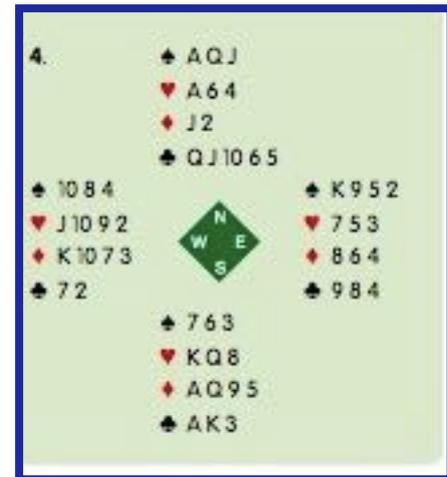


You are declarer in 3NT and West leads the ♥Q. How do you plan the play?

With favourable diamonds there are still only eight tricks available and the most realistic chance of a ninth trick must come from the spade suit. You either need to hope East has honour doubleton – a long shot – or for the spade honours to be divided when two finesses will suffice. But for that to happen you need to get to dummy twice and that can only be achieved if diamonds are 3-2. So after winning the first trick, play the ♦K and ♦Q and then overtake the ten with the ace, making sure the seven remains in dummy. Now take a spade finesse. Doubtless it will fail and a heart will be returned, but you win and lead the ♦6 to the ♦7 and repeat the spade finesse. Chances are that it will win and give you nine tricks



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

If either the spade or diamond finesse works you will have twelve easy tricks and, at first glance, it doesn't seem to matter in which order you take them. But suppose you lead the ♦J at trick two and it loses to West who returns a spade. Now you won't know whether to take the finesse or to play for the ♦10 to come down in the next two rounds. Much better is to win the opening lead in hand and lead a low diamond towards dummy. If West has the king and plays it, then you have three diamond tricks while if he ducks you simply establish a second spade trick. If East wins the trick you can still combine the chances of making a third diamond with hoping the spade king is well placed.

