

## Thinking bridge

By Eddie Kantar @NABCSpring2019 Memphis - 5

|              |                |
|--------------|----------------|
| Dir: South   | ♠ A 10         |
| Vul: N-S     | ♥ 9 4 3 2      |
|              | ♦ K Q 6 5      |
|              | ♣ J 7 3        |
|              | ♠ K Q 6 4      |
|              | ♥ A K J        |
|              | ♦ A J 10 9 8 7 |
|              | ♣ —            |
| <i>North</i> | <i>South</i>   |
|              | 1♦             |
| 1♥           | 2♠             |
| 4♦           | 4♥             |
| 4♠           | 7♦             |
| Pass         |                |

A touchy grand slam: 7♦ is your contract, and the opening lead is the ♣K. Plan your Grand Slam play.

You have a possible heart loser, a loser that can be avoided if East has the ♥Q. On the other hand, if West has the ♠J, you can lead a spade to the 10. If the 10 holds you can discard two hearts from dummy on the ♠K Q. No more heart loser. In other words, you are looking at two finesses, and if either works, you can make your grand slam—but if you take the wrong one, down you go. If only you knew which one to take.

**Tip:** When either of two finesses will give you your contract, one suit missing a queen, the other a jack, play the A-K of the suit missing the queen (hearts, in this case). If the queen doesn't appear, take a finesse in the suit missing the jack (spades). Because one finesse is as good as the other, you pick up close to an extra 20% by cashing the ♥A K before taking the spade finesse, as the ♥Q might fall under the A-K. Testing hearts without giving up the lead has kept you alive to take the spade finesse, not to mention that extra 20%.

Notice that if you had the ♠K Q 9 4 instead of the ♠K Q 6 4, the ♠J would drop under the A-K-Q almost 37% of the time allowing you to discard two hearts on winning spades and avoid the heart finesse. Alternatively, if you play the ♥A K first, you will drop the queen close to 20% of the time and avoid a future finesse that way. So if you are lucky enough to have two possible lines that might help you avoid a future finesse, take the one that offers the best percentage chance. Translation: Spades before hearts with the ♠9, hearts before spades without it.

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| The full deal: |                |
|                | ♠ A 10         |
|                | ♥ 9 4 3 2      |
|                | ♦ K Q 6 5      |
|                | ♣ J 7 3        |
| ♠ J 8 3 2      | ♠ 9 7 5        |
| ♥ Q 8 7        | ♥ 10 6 5       |
| ♦ 2            | ♦ 4 3          |
| ♣ K Q 10 4 2   | ♣ A 9 8 6 5    |
|                | ♠ K Q 6 4      |
|                | ♥ A K J        |
|                | ♦ A J 10 9 8 7 |
|                | ♣ —            |