

Finesse the 7 by Roger Lord

Dealer: East
Vul: North-South

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--|
| | North | | |
| | ♠ KQ9 | | |
| | ♥ 96 | | |
| | ♦ 98765 | | |
| | ♣ KQ7 | | |
| West | | East | |
| ♠ 103 | | ♠ A87642 | |
| ♥ J107 | | ♥ Q8 | |
| ♦ K42 | | ♦ Q103 | |
| ♣ J10632 | | ♣ A4 | |
| | South | | |
| | ♠ J5 | | |
| | ♥ AK5432 | | |
| | ♦ AJ | | |
| | ♣ 985 | | |

| | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| East | South | West | North |
| 1 Spade | 2 Hearts | Pass | 2 Notrump |
| Pass | 3 Spades | Pass | 3 Notrump |
| Pass | 4 Hearts | All Pass | |

Contract: 4 Hearts

Opening Lead: Spade Ten

To succeed as declarer on the diagramed hand, South will need logic and counting.

The bidding was aggressive. East opened one spade, South overcalled two hearts, and West passed. With a choice of calls, North decided on a forward-going two notrump. South temporized with a three spade cuebid, but next he took himself out to four hearts.

West led the spade 10, and declarer captured dummy's honor with the ace. The play could entail several variations. This declarer drew two rounds of trump, with both opponents following. Leaving the high heart outstanding, declarer played a club to dummy's queen. East took it and returned a diamond. Declarer was able to get to dummy's club honor and pitch his losing diamond jack on the high spade, but he had to lose another club to go with the high trump and the two aces already cashed, for down one.

Too bad the club ace was offside. If LHO had held the ace, two leads toward dummy's club KQ would have produced a second club trick, and the contract would have been fulfilled.

But who would you think had the club ace? It is highly probable that East had it, in order to come to enough key cards to have opened the bidding in first seat.

To make four hearts, let everything be done the same way except for the first club trick. On that trick, instead of going up with the high honor, simply insert the seven. That spot card has power equivalent to the J, 10, 9 and 8, all of which are visible to declarer. And it would not help West to split his J10, inasmuch as declarer then could come back to his hand and finesse the seven again! It's your only chance.

On hands 1. and 2., your partner opens one notrump (15-17). Opponent passes. How would you bid each hand as responder?

| | | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------|----------|------|
| 1. | S) KJ8542 | Partner | Opponent | You? |
| | H) 103 | 1 Notrump | Pass | |
| | D) Q95 | | | |
| | C) K2 | | | |

| | | | | |
|----|-----------|-----------|----------|------|
| 2. | S) KJ8542 | Partner | Opponent | You? |
| | H) A3 | 1 Notrump | Pass | |
| | D) Q95 | | | |
| | C) K2 | | | |

Answers: Hand 1. Four hearts, a Texas transfer directing opener to say four spades, which will be passed out. (Incidentally, it was St. Louisan David Carter who invented the transfer idea.) Your hand presents game-values and assures at least an eight-card fit, and the contract will be played from the right side.

Hand 2. Two hearts, showing five or more spades with unlimited strength. When opener rebids two spades, you will jump to four spades. Inasmuch as you could have forced opener directly to game on the first round, the indirect sequence discloses a slam invitation. Opener can reject the slam try (pass), or he can bid Blackwood, bid a slam or make a forward-going new-suit bid. Although this idea is simple, in practice it is often overlooked.