

**Holdup
By Roger Lord**

**Dealer: West
Vul: North-South**

North
♠ 74
♥ KQJ6
♦ AQJ
♣ J972

West
♠ K108653
♥ 93
♦ K103
♣ 64

East
♠ Q2
♥ A8542
♦ 9764
♣ A5

South
♠ AJ9
♥ 107
♦ 852
♣ KQ1083

West
2 Spades
Pass

North
Double
Pass

East
Pass
Pass

South
3 Notrump

Contract: Three Notrump

Opening Lead: Spade Six

Look only at the North and South hands. Your LHO, West, opens two spades, a normal weak two-bid. Your partner, North, doubles for takeout, and East passes. You, South, gamble game at three notrump, ending the auction.

West leads the six of spades (4th-best), to which East follows with the queen. Do you win with the ace, or do you hold up?

Unless the weak-two opener holds a seven-card spade suit (as opposed to the customary six cards), you cannot make the contract by taking the ace. If you do, sooner or later you will require tricks in the club suit. Then, if East holds the club ace, the game is over—East will win and send a spade through your J9, and they will take five spade tricks and the heart ace for three down.

If West holds the club ace, he can see by dummy's honors that he should win and shift to a heart to put East on lead with the ace, resulting in the same five spade tricks. Of course, all this presumes that the weak two-bidder would not venture that opening action holding the king of spades and two outside aces (he surely would open one spade).

If you duck at trick one, you will have some chance to make the bid. A spade will come back, you will win your ace, and success will depend on East's holding both missing aces (as shown in the diagram). In that case, you will have plenty of tricks, while West with his spades will be cut off from running his suit.

Next week, we will illustrate the opposite strategy on a new deal.

Card Combination
Dummy
AKJ1097

You have entries in both hands.
How should you play to take all six tricks?

Declarer
43

Answer: You may think about cashing a high honor first, to guard against a singleton queen to the right. But then think again, and take a first-round finesse instead! If this wins, return to your hand and repeat the finesse. The problem arises only when the opponents' cards break 4-1 with four on the left. There is only one combination of the suit with a singleton queen on the right, whereas there are four combinations of the suit with the queen with four cards in the hand to the left, which require finessing twice to bring in the suit. Thus, when the 4-1 break occurs, success is four times as likely with a first-round finesse than with a play for the drop.