

Counting the Hand

by [Brian Gunnell](#)

To end the week, we start a series of hands where the key to success is counting the opponents' distribution, in each case turning a guess into a sure thing.

Board 4
West Deals
Both Vul

♠ Q 8	♠ A J 9 4					
♥ 10 7 2	♥ Q J 9 4					
♦ A K 10 6 5 3	♦ Q	♠ K 3				
♣ 10 9	♣ Q 5 4 2	♥ K 3				
	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W S E</td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W S E	S	♦ J 9 8 7 4	
N						
W S E						
S						
	♠ 10 7 6 5 2	♣ A 8 7 6				
	♥ A 8 6 5					
	♦ 2					
	♣ K J 3					

West *North* *East* *South*
 2 ♦ Dbl 4 ♦ 4 ♠
 All pass

West's 2♦ was a Weak Two. East further crowded N-S by jumping to 4♦ and South tried 4♠. The good news for E-W was that they had bounced N-S into a poor contract, the bad news was that South makes his contract if he does a little counting.

West leads the ♦A and shifts to the ♣10. East wins the ♣A and returns the suit, vainly hoping that West can ruff. But declarer's ♣K wins the trick, then comes the ♠A, and a second spade won by East. Declarer wins the club continuation in dummy, and leads the ♥Q which East declines to cover. What next?

Three tricks have been lost and declarer must bring in the heart suit for no losers if he is to make his contract. He can either play a low heart to the ♥A, hoping that East has started with doubleton ♥K... or he can lead the ♥J, hoping to squash West's doubleton ♥10 and set up the ♥9. There's no need to guess this one. West has six diamonds for his 2♦ bid, and has shown up with two spades and two clubs. That leaves three hearts. So, declarer plays a *low* heart from dummy and, sure enough, the ♥K pops out of East's hand.

Of course, if East had known that declarer would be so unsporting as to count out the distribution, then he would have covered the ♥Q with the ♥K and given declarer a guess for the ♥10.