

Math Not Required

Today's hand offers two ways to play the clubs. Which is better? No need to be a math whiz, some simple logic comes up with the same correct solution as that calculated by our resident professor of statistics.

West led a trump, a good choice! After that opening lead, this is not a good slam at all, requiring clubs to be brought home for no losers, with only two club ruffs available on the board. Do you cash the ♣A and ruff a couple of clubs, hoping that the ♣K comes down in three rounds? Or do you finesse the ♣Q and then ruff two clubs, hoping that the king is onside and comes down in four rounds?

Things get simpler as soon as declarer realizes that, regardless of who holds the king, clubs must be 4-3, otherwise the suit will never set up. What are the chances of the club finesse working? 50%. What are the chances of one of the defenders holding ♣Kxx (we are counting the jack as an x for this discussion)? The aforementioned professor would make some calculations with lots of factorials involved and announce that, if clubs are 4-3, there are 30 possible holdings of Kxx and 40 holdings of Kxxx. That makes Kxx about a 43% probability, not as good as the finesse. And simple logic arrives at the same conclusion. If one hand has four places for the king and the other has only three places, where is the king more likely to be? That's right, in the hand with longer clubs.

So, declarer wins the opening trump lead in dummy, finesses the ♣Q, ruffs a club, crosses to the ♦K, ruffs a club, cashes ♦A, ruffs a diamond, draws trumps, and cashes the remaining clubs. Twelve tricks!

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 5 3
♥ K 10 8 4
♦ Q 10 6 3
♣ 10 9 8

♠ K 10 8
♥ Q J 6 5 2
♦ A 8 7 4
♣ 7



♠ 6 4 2
♥ A 9 7
♦ J 9 2
♣ K J 6 4

♠ A Q J 9 7
♥ 3
♦ K 5
♣ A Q 5 3 2

West	North	East	South
			1 ♠
Pass	2 ♥	Pass	3 ♣
Pass	4 ♠	Pass	6 ♠
All pass			
6 ♠ by South			
Lead: ♠ 3			