Odds-On Favorite

Against four spades, West led the ♥Q and when dummy went down both defenders could see the need to stop a heart ruff in dummy. In case it was necessary to lead through declarer (West might have ♠Kx), East overtook with his ♥K and fired back a trump.

You can count nine top tricks and are clearly not going to be allowed to get your tenth via the aforementioned heart ruff. So, clubs must come to the rescue, and one obvious line of play is simply to draw trumps, cross to the ♣A and finesse the ♣J. There's a 50% chance that East will have the ♣Q, in which case you'll make your contract. Can you find a line that is odds-on favorite to succeed?

Board 7
South Deals
Both Vul

	♠ 8 2 ♥ 7 3 ♦ Q 9 8 2 ♣ A 6 4 3 2	
♠ 9 7 ♥ Q J 10 9 8 ♦ J 6 3 ♣ Q 10 8	N W E S	♠ 6 5 4 ♥ A K 6 ♦ K 10 7 5 4 ♣ 9 5
	♠ A K Q J 10 3 ♥ 5 4 2 ♦ A ♣ K J 7	

West	*North*	*East*	*South*
			1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	4 ♠
All pass			

Lead: ♥ Q

It's better than 50% that the missing clubs are split 3-2. In fact the odds of that are 68%, so a substantially better bet for developing an extra trick from that club holding is to lose the first round of clubs and later to play the ♣K, then ♣A, hoping that the suit behaves.

But it won't work to win the trump shift at trick two, draw the remaining trumps, and then lose a club. In that case the defense will take two heart tricks and four altogether. Better timing is required. The club must be lost *before* drawing trumps, that way there will still be a trump on the board to handle that third round of hearts.

A rule of thumb: you don't need to memorize probability tables in order to know if a suit is likely to break evenly. Here's a short cut … when missing an *even* number of cards in the suit then the odds are against it splitting 1-1 or 2-2 or 3-3 … when missing an *odd* number then the suit is odds-on to split 2-1 or 3-2 or 4-3.