

Discard

Board 2
 East Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ 8 6 3
 ♥ K 10
 ♦ Q J 10 8 4
 ♣ J 10 2



♠ 9 7 5
 ♥ A Q J 9 8 5 2
 ♦ A
 ♣ A K

West North East South
 4 ♠ 5 ♥

All pass
 Lead: ♦ 6

After some thought, West leads a fourth-highest ♦6. You play low from dummy and East follows with the ♦2 and you win the ace. Given that West has a void in spades, what is the best plan to make your contract under these conditions? Specifically, will your plan cope with East having an original 7-3-1-2 distribution?

Solution:

If East has two or three diamonds, the play will be straightforward. Simply cross to dummy with a trump to the ten and lead the ♦Q. If East produces the king, you will ruff and cross back to dummy with a trump to the king and attempt to throw two spade losers on diamond winners. The contract would then succeed as long as East has at least one club and no more than two trumps.

It will also succeed under similar constraints on East's distribution when West has the ♦K. West will win the trick and, as no return can hurt you, you will make eleven tricks: seven in trumps, at least two in diamonds and two in clubs. However, the trouble with this plan occurs when East has a singleton diamond and three trumps.

♠ 8 6 3
 ♥ K 10
 ♦ Q J 10 8 4
 ♣ J 10 2

♠ —
 ♥ 6
 ♦ K 9 7 6 5 3
 ♣ Q 9 8 6 5 4

♠ A K Q J 10 4 2
 ♥ 7 4 3
 ♦ 2
 ♣ 7 3

♠ 9 7 5
 ♥ A Q J 9 8 5 2
 ♦ A
 ♣ A K

East will discard a club on the second round of diamonds. West will win the trick with the ♦K and exit with a club. After you cross to dummy with a trump to the king, East will ruff the third round of diamonds, leaving you with two spade losers and only ten tricks.

The plan that makes the contract on this layout is ingenious. At trick two you must cash the ace of clubs, then cross to dummy with a trump to the ten and lead the ♦Q.

Discard

Suppose first that East ruffs the $\heartsuit Q$. After overruffing, you will draw East's last trump when you cross back to dummy with a trump to the king. Next you will lead the lead the $\heartsuit J$ and discard the $\clubsuit K$ from hand. If West takes this with the $\heartsuit K$, as long as you have kept the $\heartsuit 8$, a diamond return will give dummy two tricks. So, West will play a club.

If it is the queen, you will discard a spade from hand. Then, whichever minor suit West plays next will force East to ruff and dummy's remaining minor suit winner will be your eleventh trick.

If West exits with a low club then it will win or East will ruff, allowing you to draw his remaining trump with the king and cash dummy's high diamond. Either way, you will make eleven tricks.

A variant comes when East ruffs the first diamond and, after you draw East's remaining trump with the king, West lets the $\heartsuit J$ hold. Then you will continue with the jack of clubs and discard a spade from hand. As West will have only minor cards remaining, he can do no better than win the queen of clubs and play the king of diamonds, which avoids immediate surrender. However, you will counter by throwing another spade from hand. Then he will have to give the lead to dummy for your eleventh trick.

When East correctly discards on the second heart, declarer follows the general idea already outlined, discarding the $\clubsuit K$. If West takes the trick, he is endplayed into leading a club next, and how to cope with any eventuality has been discussed in the previous paragraph. You will make seven trumps, two diamonds, the $\clubsuit A$ and the two minor-suit winners left in dummy.

If West ducks the $\heartsuit Q$, you continue with the $\heartsuit J$. If East does not ruff this, West wins and faces the unsolvable dilemmas already discussed. If East does ruff the $\heartsuit J$, you will overruff and cross to dummy with a trump to lead the $\clubsuit J$, which, as we have seen, gives West no winning option.

This approach makes the contract whenever the straightforward play does. However, it fails when East began with a 7-3-1-2 shape and a doubleton $\clubsuit Q$, which is only a two in seven chance.