

First Things First

Some players don't approve of preemptive bids when holding a four-card major, pointing out that it risks missing (in this case) a 4-4 heart fit. Others will say that North's heart suit is pitifully weak, and surely that long, strong minor needs to be bid.

On the actual deal, North's 3♦ preempt got North-South to a dubious three notrump when 4♥ was indeed a superior contract. Against three notrump, the opening lead was a spade to East's ace, then a spade to declarer's jack and West's queen, followed by a third spade. On the second and third spades, dummy pitched a club and a diamond (a heart could not be spared as the fourth heart is a potential entry).

After winning the third spade trick, how would *you* play the diamond suit? Would you finesse against the queen, or would you play for the drop? When the hand was played, our declarer knew that with an eight-card fit, the diamond finesse was the percentage play, so he successfully ran the jack. That held, but the bad news was that hearts were 4-1, so dummy had no entry and the good diamonds were stranded.

Declarer goofed. He should have cashed two high hearts first ... if that suit split 3-2 then he could take the diamond finesse, the most likely way to bring in the suit ... but when hearts were 4-1, the lack of dummy entries meant that he must rely on the singleton or doubleton ♦Q to make his contract. That would have been ten tricks, just like those who declared the superior 4♥ contract. Does this deal settle the debate about preempting with a four-card major? Not at all, it merely tells us that rotten contracts sometimes make, especially when played correctly.

Board 9

North Deals
E-W Vul

♠ 7													
♥ 10 7 4 3													
♦ A K 10 9 6 3 2													
♣ 6													
♠ Q 10 8 4 3	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td style="background-color: #008000; color: white;"></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ A 9 6 5		
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ 2		♥ J 9 8 6											
♦ Q 4		♦ 8 7 5											
♣ A 7 4 3 2		♣ 9 5											
		♠ K J 2											
		♥ A K Q 5											
		♦ J											
		♣ K Q J 10 8											
West	North	East	South										
	3 ♦	Pass	3 NT										
All pass													
Lead: ♠ 4													