

Wherever you see underlined bold text please visit www.wednesdaygame.com for more information.

On **Board 2** you are declaring 3 in the West seat.

	A75 A52 AK92 Q86	N-S Vul
KQJ964 Q83 T AJ3	North Declarer Dummy South	T32 JT97 875 K52
	8 K64 QJ643 T974	

Against 3, North leads the A, then the K, which you ruff. You lead the K which is ducked, then the Q, won by North's Ace, South pitching a Club. North continues with Diamonds, which you ruff. Despite the 6-3 fit, you are in danger of losing control of the hand. How do you avoid the ignominy of running out of trumps?

If you draw the last trump and go about the Heart suit, you'll run out of trumps before they run out of Diamonds and before the Hearts are established. The solution is not to draw that last trump, but to go after Hearts, leaving that lurker at large. Now, when they win the first Heart, Dummy still has a trump to handle the Diamond force. Yes, there is the danger that the defense may be able to organize a Heart ruff if West started with Ax or Kx of Hearts but that is a risk which has to be taken, as the alternative is sure defeat.

OK, now for the second bump in the road. You leave a trump out, play on Hearts, and South wins the King. Realizing that the forcing defense will no longer work, South shifts to the Club Ten. What now? Let us most definitely *not* take that "free finesse", it will cost the contract! The finesse will lose and Dummy will win the trick ... now, the defense will cleverly duck the second round of Hearts, cutting you off from Dummy's 13th Heart and leaving your hand with a Club loser for down one. Instead, you hop up with your A, draw the last trump (you can afford to now), knock out the second high Heart, and, if necessary, you have the K as an entry to Dummy for the 13th Heart.

Keys to Success

- Draw only two rounds of trumps before playing Hearts
- Decline the "free" Club finesse, saving Dummy's entry

Board 4 gave N-S a chance to show off their slam-bidding skills.

North	South	West	North	East	South
KJT943	AQ72	Pass	1	2	3
AK864	QT9	Pass	3	Pass	4
6	42	Pass	4	Pass	5
J	AK84	Pass	5	Pass	6
All Pass					

After South's 3 (showing values and Spade support), North *almost* has a perfect hand for Roman Key Card. If South has two Key Cards and the Q that may well be enough. But there is one small snag ... if South has three small Hearts there will be an inescapable loser in the suit. How does North solve that problem?

We offer two ways to approach this hand:

- North could just say "Damn the torpedoes!" and charge into Roman Key Card, and then just bid the slam anyway, praying that South has a doubleton Heart or else the Queen;
- Or, North could hope that some subtle cue-bidding will unlock the mysteries of the hand, as in the auction above.

South's 4 bid was easy enough, her hand was plenty good enough to make a below-game slam-try. And 5 was pretty obvious, too ... she had nothing else to cue-bid, but did not want to show weakness with a 4 bid, and did not have the sort of hand that should be taking charge with Roman Key Card.

South's real problem is on the next round of bidding when she tries to figure out what North's sequence means. North appears to have AK, and a Diamond control, and was aware of our Club control some time ago. So, one wonders what was her impediment to launching a Roman Key Card auction. One might deduce, from the way that Partner has gone out of her way to show us Hearts twice, that this is a key suit and that perhaps there is a third round loser there. But, it doesn't always pay to over-think these auctions ... South has good trumps (including a 4th one) and the Q which looks like a better card now than it seemed to be earlier. And so she should bid the slam.

Board 13	J843 AKQ3 QT AQ3	Both Vul
AK J97 864 J9765	<i>Declarer</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Dummy</i>	Q76 85 KJ975 K84
	T952 T642 A32 T2	

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1	1	Dbl
1NT	Dbl	2	Pass
Pass	2	All Pass	

Board 23	T952 AQ75 K4 AKJ	Both Vul
Q4 863 9652 7543	<i>Declarer</i> <i>West</i> <i>East</i> <i>Dummy</i>	KJ873 42 QJT8 Q8
	A6 KJT9 A73 T962	

<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
1	Pass	1	1
2	Pass	3	Pass
3	Pass	4	All Pass

A few points on the auction:

- East's vulnerable 1 overall was a little ragged but not completely crazy
- South's **Negative Double** showed *both* majors (the usual treatment nowadays, but there was a time when it was common for 1 or 1 to show a 5-card suit, and therefore the Double could be made with just one 4-card major). Yes, indeed, South is certainly minimum for her Double ☺
- West's 1NT was around 8-11 HCP's (it's advisable to play a higher range than one would opposite an opening bid)
- North's Double showed a good hand

Against 2, it looks as if the defense might have five easy tricks (three Spades, a Club and a Diamond), but one of them will go away if East's opening lead is a minor suit. Suppose that East avoids that trap and leads a trump. As Declarer, can you see a **devious ploy** which might bring in a 9th trick for Declarer?

At Trick 2, Declarer might try leading a Spade (the not-entirely-honest Eight would be the Spade most likely to create confusion in the defensive ranks), looking for all the world like someone who is trying to organize a ruff or two in his hand. West wins, naively continues trumps, Declarer exits the J, and now West is on auto-pilot and exits a third trump. Oops! Declarer exits with another Spade and suddenly East is end-played in the minors. He did well not to lead one originally, but his Partner's sleepy defense has forced him to do so in the end-game.

But full marks to North for giving West a chance to go wrong ... if she had merely drawn trumps before playing on Spades West would have had no option but to shift to a minor and collect the defense's 5th trick.

Assuming that N-S play **Support Doubles**, then South's 2 shows four Hearts. Now North might be feeling slammish, what should be her next move? Not **Roman Key Card**, that would be a bit much ... and not 4, that would not be enough.

We would choose 3, the most descriptive bid available. 3 is forcing (for one round), not an attempt to play in Clubs. Ostensibly, it is a game-try, though in fact North is always going at least to game, and is actually harboring fond hopes of slam. But, 3 does give South to express an opinion, and her return to 3 (not accepting the "game-try") indicates a poor opinion of her hand. So, North gives up on slam and signs off in 4.

The play in 4 could be quite subtle. Suppose that East's opening lead is the Q, won by Declarer's King. Declarer can score 12 tricks if she can guess to drop the doubleton off-side Q. Is there any good reason why she should? Maybe. There are only 11 missing HCP's and East no doubt has most of them for his vulnerable overcall. But there's no reason why East could not have 9 HCP's and West the Q.

It's time to **accumulate more evidence**. After winning the first trick, Declarer draws three rounds of trumps ending in her hand, leads a low Spade to Dummy's Ace, and exits a Spade to West's Queen. This information reduces East's maximum point-count to 9, and if he doesn't have the Q then he'll be further reduced to 7. We'd say that the odds now favor playing for the drop of the Q rather than playing for the on-side Q with a 3-3 break (the break is necessary for the 12th trick).