





Both tables in our match played this hand in 3NT. Neither North had any trouble finding the diamond lead. One off, and a flat board. You will notice that despite having mirrored 3-4-3-3 hands, the “favourable” diamond layout allows 4♥ to make.

As West you find yourself in 4♠ after North has overcalled 2♣.

Dealer South None

♠ AKQ92		♠ J854
♥ AQ986		♥ T4
♦ 9		♦ QJ652
♣ JT		♣ 96

The defence starts A♣, small club to the King and then a diamond back to the Ace. Now North puts the Q♣ on the table. The remaining cards are:


Dealer South None

♠ AKQ92		♠ J854
♥ AQ986		♥ T4
♦		♦ QJ65
♣		♣

If you pitch a heart from dummy, ruffing in hand, you have good chances of setting up the heart suit. I make it about 60%, although I won't bore you with the maths. The other option is to take the heart finesse, either immediately, or after drawing trumps. There are some layouts which will result in defeat even with the King onside – so the chances of success are slightly less than 50%,.

Unfortunately the complete hand was as follows, so pitching a heart led to one down.

Dealer South None


		♠ 6
		♥ 75
		♦ AT83
		♣ AQ7542
♠ AKQ92		♠ J854
♥ AQ986		♥ T4
♦ 9		♦ QJ652
♣ JT		♣ 96
		♠ T73
		♥ KJ32
		♦ K74
		♣ K83

At the other table the ruff and sluff was not offered, so declarer's only option was the winning heart finesse.

Working with the “odds” may be misleading. You might wonder if North would make the club play if they held the ♥ K - an almost guaranteed setting trick.

You pick up the North cards, two 6-card majors each headed by KQJ, and convince yourself that you won't be defending. At one table East had a 3♣ opening, showing clubs and a major, at least 5/5 with a good club suit – I wonder how often that comes up. It worked well on this hand. West raised to 5♣ and North was stymied, particularly knowing that LHO had a 5 card major!

Dealer East NS Vul


<p>♠ A32 ♥ - ♦ KJ854 ♣ Q8753</p>		<p>♠ KQJ974 ♥ KQJ872 ♦ 9 ♣ -</p> <p>♠ - ♥ T6543 ♦ AQ ♣ KJT962</p> <p>♠ T865 ♥ A9 ♦ T7632 ♣ A4</p>
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At our table East opened the bidding with 1♣ and then showed hearts. The bidding reached 5♣ quite quickly – for a flat board.

If North perseveres, they need to be prepared to play at the 6 level, since EW make 12 tricks in clubs.


After West opens 1♠, both Norths found the aggressive 2♦ overcall. At our table we bid to 4♠ and were allowed to play there. Our team mates found the good 5♦ game and EW tried 5♠ which was doubled by South. There must have been some concerns, but in this case her hand's lack of defensive tricks worked in her favour. Any spade contract hinges on the heart finesse, which can be taken against either opponent. Once South shows up with the ♣A, both declarers quite reasonably placed the ♥Q in the North hand. Bad luck – but one down compared to two down doubled proved to be a handy pick up.

Dealer South All Vul

<p>♠ AKQJT2 ♥ KJT9 ♦ Q ♣ 96</p>		<p>♠ 97 ♥ 85 ♦ AK9763 ♣ Q72</p> <p>♠ 86543 ♥ A42 ♦ 84 ♣ K43</p> <p>♠ - ♥ Q763 ♦ JT52 ♣ AJT85</p>
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.Therese and Pele bid a nice 3NT with the NS cards. The lacking high card points are compensated by the fine diamond suit.

Dealer South NS Vul

<p>♠ QT ♥ KT9654 ♦ 96 ♣ K92</p>		<p>♠ 92 ♥ AQ3 ♦ AQJT32 ♣ JT</p> <p>♠ AJ8743 ♥ J2 ♦ 75 ♣ Q53</p>
		<p>♠ K65 ♥ 87 ♦ K84 ♣ A8764</p>

And to emphasise that a surplus of HCP does not guarantee game, look at the following example:

Dealer East NS Vul

<p>♠ 853 ♥ 42 ♦ J632 ♣ 9873</p>		<p>♠ Q97 ♥ JT65 ♦ KQ ♣ AKT2</p> <p>♠ A64 ♥ Q973 ♦ A9875 ♣ 5</p>
		<p>♠ KJT2 ♥ AK8 ♦ T4 ♣ QJ64</p>

At both tables North played in 3NT after showing a balanced 15-17 with a 4 card heart suit. As East, you lead a diamond and partner contributes the Jack. Declarer wins with the Queen and then leads the ♠9. Any alarm bells ringing? Give declarer 15 HCP for the moment, add dummy's 14 and your 10. That leaves partner with at most a Jack – and you have just seen it!

Given time, declarer can probably establish 10 or 11 winners. But if his diamond holding is KQ tight, you can beat this by rising ♠A and continuing with the ♦A. Your pips in the diamond suit will prevent any chance of a blockage. If you duck the spade, think about the discards you will have to make when declarer plays 4 rounds of clubs. You can follow twice and then pitch a spade, but then you either have to throw a diamond (the setting trick) or come down to doubleton queen of hearts.

Alternatively, if North is allowed to sneak through a spade trick, the heart finesse is another route to nine tricks.