

♠ 7 4

♥ K 7 6

♦ K Q 4 3

♣ K Q 10 5

♠ A K J 10 6 5

♥ 5 4 3

♦ A 2

♣ 4 2

South is the declarer in 4♠ and West leads the ♥2.

In a 4♠ contract the first step is to focus on the number of potential losers you have, one potential spade loser as you are missing the ♠Q. There are three potential heart losers and a sure club loser. That is five potential losers.

Following the opening lead of the ♥2, right away you are faced with a decision, should you play the king? Given the heart lead you assume East has the Ace so you should play low from dummy. By playing low you avoid letting the defenders take the first three heart tricks.

East wins the first trick with the ♥J and switches to the ♦10.

You need to win the trick in your hand with the ♦A so the suit won't be blocked.

Now the next critical decision, how do you plan on drawing the defenders' trumps? You might be tempted to play the ♠A or ♠K in case West holds a singleton ♠Q and even if West doesn't hold a singleton spade, as long as the spades are divided 3-2 you can still take a spade finesse on the second round of trumps. Let's see what happens if that is what you do:

You draw one round of trumps with the ♠A and both defenders follow suit, but the ♠Q doesn't appear.

So it appears you will have to take a spade finesse after all. Before you do that, you need to take your diamond winners as if the spade finesse loses you don't want to give West the opportunity to lead another heart before you have discarded one of your heart losers.

Lead a diamond to the ♦Q and continue with the ♦K, discarding a heart.

You draw a second round of trumps by playing dummy's remaining spade, you finesse the ♠10 which wins the trick but West shows out. The trumps have divided 4-1 and East still has two trumps left the ♠Q – 9

You may as well draw another round of trumps with the ♠K, then lead a low club. West rises with the ♣A and continues with the ♥Q. There is still no reason to play the ♥K and East plays a low heart allowing West to win the trick.

It doesn't matter what West leads next as sooner or later you will have to give up a trump to East's ♠Q.

4♠ is down one, losing two hearts, one club and one spade. It's too bad the trumps didn't break more favourably. Is there anything more you could have done?

The full deal:

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

West has led the ♥2 and you correctly play a low heart from dummy.

East wins with the ♥J and switches to the ♦10. Win with the ♦A, as before, now think about drawing trumps. Should you play a high spade first hoping for a singleton? No! With this spade combination you should always plan on taking **two** finesses. Playing a high spade will only work if West holds the singleton ♠Q, but it will lose in all other combinations.

In this case you still want to get rid of a heart loser so lead a diamond and play the ♦Q and the ♦K, discarding a heart loser.

Now tackle the trump suit, a low spade is led, and East follows with a low spade, play the ♠10 or ♠J. That wins the trick, but you need to repeat the finesse, as planned. So to get back to dummy now lead a low club, if the defenders win this trick you can get back to dummy later with a club winner. If they let you win this trick you are where you want to be for another spade finesse.

If West wins with the ♣A and plays the ♥Q, again there isn't much point in playing the ♥K as you know East holds the ♥A. When West wins that trick and plays the ♦J you can play the last diamond from dummy and ruff this trick with a low spade.

Then lead a club and win the trick with the ♣Q and play dummy's last spade playing the ♠J (or ♠10) knowing East has the ♠Q. Play the ♠A to draw one of East's remaining trumps and the ♠K removes East's ♠Q. Your last trump is a winner and you have made your 4♠ contract, losing only two hearts and one club, but **no** spades.

Summary:

This is a typical deal where both sides have their chances and declarer has to make the most of the opportunities presented by the defence.

If West had led the ♥Q or ♥10, the defenders could immediately take the first three heart tricks, but with no sequence West made the normal lead of the ♥2. If you had played dummy's ♥K, the defenders would have taken their three heart tricks plus the ♣A to defeat the contract. By playing low you give yourself a chance. Also, after winning with the ♥J, East has a chance to defeat the contract by leading a club, West can win and lead another heart trapping dummy's ♥K. East has to guess whether West holds the ♣A or the ♦A and guesses wrong giving declarer a chance!