

North

♠ A 5 2
♥ Q 8
♦ K 10 8 4
♣ J 9 6 3

South

♠ Q 9
♥ A K 2
♦ A J 5
♣ A K Q 10 2

| WEST | NORTH | EAST | SOUTH |
|------|-------|------|-------|
| | | | 2♣ |
| 3♥ | Dbl | Pass | 3NT |
| Pass | 4NT | Pass | 6♣ |
| Pass | Pass | Pass | |

Lead: ♠10

North-South reached a good slam after some competitive bidding from West. South started with a fine two club bid and West took advantage of the vulnerability to bid three hearts. North doubled for takeout, a sensible treatment. It is odd, in that some pairs use a double by North to say that they have nothing. Different strokes for different folks.

South bid three notrump with misgivings. He might have had a little less, but he was missing so many fillers that he settled for a modest game. North felt he had a tad extra, and showed it by making a quantitative notrump raise. This was all South needed to hear and he went directly to six clubs.

West led the ten of spades. How should South play? One very acceptable line is to play low from dummy, allowing East to have the king of spades. That will leave you with twelve top tricks, regardless of where that queen of diamonds is.

Do you see a better line?

While you are thinking about this, you might wish to wonder what West has in spades. It strikes me that the ten of spades might be a singleton. It does not have to be, but it is possible. The nine is not top of a sequence so it rates to be from shortness.

Do you see a good enough reason not to finesse in spades?

There is a good reason. Your slam is virtually cold and does not require taking the risk that West has a stiff spade.

I will give you that trumps divide three-one. I don't want anyone to get lost in thought about the chances that clubs divide four-zero

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|---|---|---|
| | North ♠ A 5 2 ♥ Q 8 ♦ K 10 8 4 ♣ J 9 6 3 | |
| West ♠ 10 ♥ J 10 9 7 6 4 3 ♦ Q 7 ♣ 7 5 4 | | East ♠ K J 8 7 6 4 3 ♥ 5 ♦ 9 6 3 2 ♣ 8 |
| | South ♠ Q 9 ♥ A K 2 ♦ A J 5 ♣ A K Q 10 2 | |

Given that clubs divide, the winning play is to go up with the ace of spades. Draw trump. It takes three rounds, West having the long trump. You can, if you wish, try to guess diamonds and perhaps make an overtrick, but that is poor thinking. A bad

guess in diamonds and you may go down. Better to do something else which ensures taking twelve tricks. Do you see the correct line at this point?

Play three rounds of hearts and discard one of dummy's spades. Now give East his king of spades. On this trick, you will see with satisfaction that West has just one spade. Finessing at trick one would cost you the slam. East is in now with the king of spades and is faced with the classic choice of leading a diamond, finding the queen for you, or leading a spade, giving you a sluff and a ruff.

The endplay is easy enough, but it is possible to have a blind spot towards the need for discarding a spade from dummy. If you don't see that, you will have to try to find the queen of diamonds.

Note West's three heart bid. Even though it will go down five tricks, it is still a good bid. West did not HAVE to find East with a hopeless hand. In the meantime, the bid will expose a flaw in most partnership bidding methods. Very few North-South pairs will be happy to welcome this kind of bidding after their two club opening bids.