

INCREASING YOUR FINESSE CHANCES

West dealt and passed. Your partner opened 1♣ and RHO passed. You respond 1♠ and partner raises you to 2♠. What are your thoughts:

S	South
♠	AJ832
♥	103
♦	A7653
♣	9

When you picked up your hand you counted 9 HCP. Since you had two 5-card suits, you get to add 2 more points. But once your partner supports your suit you can give yourself some more points. Your long side suit is worth 1 point and your singleton club now is worth 2 more points. Now you're up to 14 total points. Since partner also holds 13 points, you know you have enough for game and a definite 8-card and probably a 9-card spade fit. You don't have to worry about missing a slam because his 2♠ showed a minimum opening between roughly 12 and 15 HCP. Your best bid is 4♠ the game you think you can make.

West leads the ♥A and you see this dummy:

N	North
♠	K1054
♥	Q64
♦	KJ8
♣	A65

West leads ♥A

S	South
♠	AJ832
♥	103
♦	A7653
♣	9

West made a smart move by not following up the ♥A lead with the ♥K. This would set up the dummy's ♥Q for a discard. He switched to a low club.

You see two heart losers and one diamond loser. You cannot afford a spade loser. You should see no reason not to pull trump first. Since you have nine of them, you should play the ♠AK. The probability of either a 2-2 or a fall of the ♠Q is slightly greater than catching the ♠Q in a finesse. Unfortunately, the bridge gods worked against you and the ♠Q did not appear. Now it is essential you win the diamond finesse. Do not pull the last master trump. Let East take it when he wants to. If you are lucky, he will ruff one of your tricks, thus conserving your own trump. If you or East leads the ♠Q, you waste two of your trump on a trick you aren't even getting.

You have to finesse against West, so the correct procedure is to win the second trump in the dummy and play a low diamond to the the ♦A in your hand. This caters to a single ♦Q in one of the hands. Then lead the second diamond to the ♦KJ in the dummy. This way, you win when East holds a singleton ♦Q; or when West holds the ♦Q either singleton, doubleton or tripleton.

What the bridge gods took away on the trump draw, he gave back here when East was forced to play the ♦Q on the first diamond.

You can set up the 5th diamond by ruffing the 4th diamond. West can take his ♠Q when he sees fit and lead the heart for his 3rd trick. But that is all they take on this hand.

This is the entire deal:

D 4	N North	W N E S
	♠ K1054 ♥ Q64 ♦ KJ8 ♣ A65	P 1♣ P 1♠ P 2♠ P 4♠ P P P
W West		E East
♠ 6 ♥ AK8 ♦ 10942 ♣ QJ432		♠ Q97 ♥ J9752 ♦ Q ♣ K1087
	S South	
	♠ AJ832 ♥ 103 ♦ A7653 ♣ 9	4♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0

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You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/ybdqz4xf>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.