

PLAYING to the FIRST TRICK

Q1098 DEALER – 1 Diamond
A4 2 Spades
Q863 Pass
AQ3

54 Pass
10752 Pass
A109
10872

76 Pass
J986 Pass
K52 Pass
KJ96

AKJ32 1 Spade
KQ3 4 Spades
J74
54

Opening lead: 2 of Clubs. Plan the Play. Spades are not 4-0.

You'll go down one because of a hasty decision at trick one if you play the Queen. Say the Q loses to the King and a club is returned. What are you going to do about your diamonds? You can discard one from dummy on a heart, but that will leave you with three diamonds in each hand. If the opponents' diamonds are divided, you will have found a way to go down in a cold contract.

The winning (and correct) line is to win the Ace of clubs at trick one and draw trump, discard a club on the 3rd heart and exit a club stripping that suit. Whoever wins the club must either break diamonds, meaning declarer will lose only two tricks in the suit, or give you a ruff and a sluff with a club or heart exit.

Key lesson pointer: Notice the importance of "evening out" the club suit by discarding a club on a heart. Now each hand has one club remaining for the strip-and-throw-in process.

A club finesse at trick one shows a lack of thought before playing to the first trick, usually the most important trick of all.

		Q10982	DEALER – 1 Spade		
		A		2 NT	
		AK9		Pass	
		6542			
K64				AJ753	Pass
J973	Pass			52	Pass
QJ42	Pass			107	Pass
109				KJ83	
		Void			
		KQ10864	2 Hearts		
		8653	4 Hearts		
		AQ7			

West leads the 10 of clubs. You in the Q. Assume there is a heart loser. All you need to do is find West with at least 2 clubs, and at least 3 spades. Play Ace of hearts from dummy, ruff a spade, Cash 2 high trumps, cash club Ace, lead a diamond to the Ace, spade ruff. Lead a diamond to the King, Spade ruff. You played to ruff spades with small hearts, plus 10 tricks. 3 Spade ruffs, 3 hearts, 2 diamonds, 2 clubs.

Tip: Learn to draw negative inferences. Your opponent's auction is 1NT – 3NT. Your hold: K1093 62 854 K1093
It's reasonable to choose the major. If Stayman been used, you'd more likely lead a club.

Tip: Trust your partner. If you act as if your partner is unreliable, that expectation will be met. If you always assume your partner is correct, you will be rewarded. This is especially important in competitive bidding situations. If you have clear agreements about how you evaluate hands and what bids mean in competitive auctions, you should always assume you partner has his bid.

Tip: Recognize that defense is half the game. Work on your opening leads and third-hand play.
