PRINCIPLE OF FAST ARRIVAL

Your are the dealer with this hand:

S South
- ♠ AK2
- ♥ K1074
- ♦ K8
- ♣ AQ63

Although your hand Is balanced, you are too strong for a 1NT opening and not strong enough for 2NT. You must open 1♣ and rebid 2NT to show this "in between" balanced hand. Partner's first response is 1♠ and over your 2NT, he jumps to 4♠. How do you interpret that?

There is a principle in bridge called "fast arrival." It says that the faster you get to your objective, the weaker you are. On the other hand, the slower you go, the more powerful you are. Therefore, when North jumps a level to get to his "game," he is saying he can only see game being bid and he has no appetite for a slam, based on South's prior bid. Since South promised no more than 19 points, North is in the best position to know how high the partnership can go. Also, since he passed 3NT, he must have an unbalanced hand with long spades. Since you only promised 2 spades with your "balanced" rebid, he probably holds six of them. There is no reason not to pass 4♠.

East leads the ♣J. Take over the North hand and plan the play:

S South
- ♠ AK2
- ♥ K1074
- ♦ K8
- ♣ AQ63

East leads ♣J

N North
- ♠ QJ10976
- ♥ 953
- ♦ Q7
- ♣ K8

North counts his losers. He has no losers in the black suits, but he sees 3 heart losers and 1 diamond loser. This is one too many. He should take note of the imbalance in the club suit. He can discard 1 heart on the third club, thus eliminating one of the losers.

Can you do better?

There are only 4 trump outstanding and even if they break 4-0, you can draw all of them. There isn't anything else you can do in the diamond suit but promote 1 trick by driving out the ♦A.

That leaves the heart suit. Some might consider finessing the ♥10 by leading a small heart up to the dummy. This is a losing proposition. There is a 75% probability that West will hold either the ♥Q or the ♥J – or both. You are odds on to lose that trick as well as the ♥A. No, your only hope for another trick is to finesse the ♥K, hoping that the ♥A is on your right. This is a 50%. Even so, it doesn't jeaopardize your contract to try it. If you can take 11 tricks while others only take 10 tricks, you will score very well.

So win the first club with the ♣K, pull trump, discard a heart on the ♣Q and lead a small heart to the ♥K, holding your breath. Bingo, the ♥ K wins and you make 5♥.

This is the entire deal:

11	N North	W	N	E	S
D	♠ QJ10976				1♣
	♥ 953	P	1♠	P	2NT
	♦ Q7	P	4♠	P	P
	♣ K8	P			

W West		E East
♠		♠ 8543
♥ J86		♥ AQ2
♦ A105432		♦ J96
♣ 9752		♣ J104

S South	
♠ AK2	
♥ K1074	
♦ K8	
♣ AQ63	4♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0

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

http://tinyurl.com/y9n2vjlz , 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.