

THINK TWICE CUT ONCE

11 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ Q7 ♥ J832 ♦ AQ5 ♣ A742	P 2♣ P 2♥ P 3♥ P 4NT P 5♥ P 6♥ P P P
W West	♠ K108 ♥ Q75 ♦ 983 ♣ QJ103	E East
	♠ AJ5 ♥ AK10964 ♦ K74 ♣ 8	♠ 96432 ♥ ♦ J1062 ♣ K965
	S South	6♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You are in the South seat and end up in 6♥ with the bidding shown above. Your partner has responded at the 2-level, which is a game force in the system you are using. You rebid your 6-card suit. You haven't found a fit yet and you don't want to jump for your rebid. You are guaranteed to reach game and you need room to find the best strain for the ultimate contract. When your partner supports hearts your hand improves. You have 1st or 2nd round control in all the suits. If you are not off 2 aces, you have a good play for a slam. You bid 4NT blackwood and find that partner has two aces. You place the contract in 6♥.

West leads the ♣Q and you must plan your play. You have 10 hearts between you so you probably don't have any trump losers. You don't have any diamond or club losers but you have one potential spade loser. Things are looking very good.

Whenever you think things are looking good it is time to think again. Yes, hearts will probably break 2-1 but if they don't – what could happen. If all the hearts are in the East, you can easily finesse against the ♥Q by leading to your hand after you first play the ♥A to get the bad news. But if West holds the three hearts you will certainly lose a heart.

However, if that happens you still have the spade finesse to fall back on, Unless the finesse loses also. So if the worst happens, West will hold the three outstanding hearts as well as the ♠K. Is there anything you can do about that?

As a matter of fact there is. Wouldn't it be grand if when West wins the ♥Q he will have to lead a spade into you're ♠A-J tenace? This is called an endplay and in order to set it up you must eliminate any possibility of West playing a different suit when he wins the trump. That will mean stripping his hand of diamonds and clubs.

You can play the three diamonds but to strip the hand of clubs you will have to win the ♣A and ruff three of dummy's little clubs. The dummy is very short of entries so it is essential that you start ruffing immediately. If you win the ♣A and lead a trump it will be impossible to ruff the three clubs. There are only two entries left in the dummy. You must lead a club to your hand for trick 2 and ruff. Then you can test the hearts by playing the ♥A. You get the bad news so you cash the ♥K and then lead a low diamond to the ♦Q and ruff another club. Finally you lead up to the ♦A and ruff the final club, finishing with the ♦K from your hand.

Now it's time to throw West in with the heart. He will win the ♥Q but will have to lead a spade away from his ♠K, giving you a free finesse – and your contract.

Actually, you were lucky that West had no more than 3 diamonds or 4 clubs, and therefore, didn't have an exit card in those suits. If he had, then you would have trumped it in the dummy and had to depend on the spade finesse.

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

<http://tinyurl.com/kgysz6t> , 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.