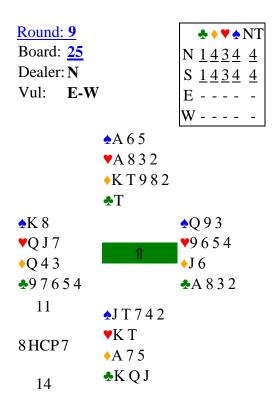
Handling a delicate trump suit

Zachary Yan (South) was declarer in the normal 4♠ contract. The lead was a club to the Ace and a heart return. With two outside losers the problem is how to play the trump suit for one loser.



Looking at the combined holding ♠A65 opposite ♠JT742 clearly there is no play if spades are 5-0. Only one chance if 4-1 and that is a singleton honour on your left, that involves cashing A♠ this loses to all 3-2 breaks (except KQ doubleton). So the question rests with what chances you have on various 3-2 breaks.

If West has ♠KQ9 or ♠KQ8 you can't avoid 2 losers. If East Has ♠KQx you can't win either.

If either player has ♠KQ doubleton you win so long as you play A♠ either on the first round or the second.

So can you win if West has ♠Hxx and East as ♠Hx? Option 1

Yes you can by starting with a low card from ♠Axx towards your J♠. If East plays low on the second round you drop the now bare honour with your Ace.

Can you win if West has Hx and East as Hxx? Option 2

Yes you can by starting by running J♠ or T♠ towards ♠Axx. If West plays low you play low. You drop the now bare honour with your Ace.

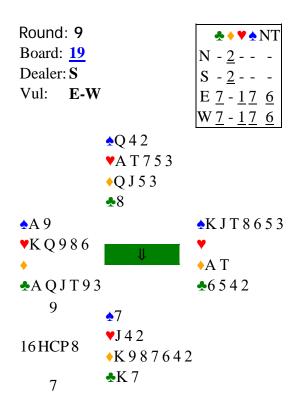
Both lines win when either player has ♠KQ doubleton.

Is it just a question of guessing one way or the other?

Not quite. There is one other case where Option 2 works but Option 1 fails. West has &KQ3 and East has &98.

Vincent and judging by the result most declarers got that play right, or maybe some of them received a more helpful lead.

On hand 19 it was all on, competitive bidding at its fiercest.



Mark Hangartner

West	North	East	South 3
3♥	Pass	3♠	Pass
4♣	Pass	44	Pass
5•	Double	6.	All Pass

North could have made things even harder with a jump raise to 5 rather than lurking.

Note West's excellent revaluation of his hand in the light of East's bidding.

The best contract of 6♣ was reached by six pairs, two bid 6♣, three in game contracts and one lucky NS got to play 5♦ undoubled.

How did you get on? With the benefit of seeing all the hands what would your sequence be?