

West has a delicate choice of lead. The spades and diamonds are certainly not attractive after they have been bid by the opposition. The clubs are slightly stronger than the hearts, but when the decision is close it is usually right to attack the major suit, on the grounds that if either opponent had held this suit at all strongly he might have mentioned it. West leads the five of hearts, therefore.

With A Q x or A Q x x of a suit led by partner against no trumps it is correct to play the queen, mainly because this makes it more difficult for the declarer to hold up the king.

South captures the queen of hearts with the king and notes that he now has seven top winners. The spades are certainly the most likely source of extra tricks, but there is a very good reason not to play on spades: if South gives up a spade he will surely lose at least three hearts, a spade and a club.

A finesse against the queen of clubs, on the other hand, will bring in nine tricks if it succeeds and if the opponents can take only three tricks in hearts. It is correct to take the four diamond tricks first and then to run the nine of clubs. East will win the first or second club and, by underleading his ace, can take three heart tricks, but that is all. South still has the king of spades as an entry if he needs to take another finesse in clubs.

Example 34

The last hand showed that it is not necessarily the longest suit that must be established at no trumps. The next one shows that, as between two suits of equal length, it is not necessarily right to play on the stronger.

♠ Q 8 3	♠ A 10 7	♠ K 9 6 2			
♥ J 10 9 6 4	♥ Q 3	♥ 8 7 5			
♦ K J 10	♦ 7 5 2	♦ Q 9			
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With North the dealer at love all, the bidding goes:

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
—	—	1 ♣	pass
1 ♦	pass	2 ♣(1)	pass
3NT(2)	pass	pass	pass

1) Some players would rebid one no trump, but others (those who play a 12—14 opening no trump) reserve this rebid for a slightly stronger hand.

2) Applying the test of opening bid facing an opening bid, South must bid game.

West leads the jack of hearts and the problem is, which suit to develop, clubs or diamonds?

Declarer has seven top tricks and so needs to develop two extra tricks in the minor suits. There are several factors to consider.

Firstly, which suit offers the better mathematical chance? Here a knowledge of the odds is useful. The diamonds will produce two extra tricks if they break 3—2. This is a 68% chance—better than 2 to 1 on. The clubs will produce four tricks if the suit breaks 3—3 or if they are 4—2 and the finesse for the queen is right. (You cannot count the situation where East has a doubleton queen, because you are intending to finesse the jack.) These two possibilities combined add up to about 60%; so, a little surprisingly perhaps, there is a better chance to develop extra tricks in diamonds than in clubs.

Next, declarer must study the possible dangers. Can he afford to lose two diamonds in the process of establishing this suit? The answer is yes. Even after the lead he has two more stoppers in hearts and the spades are reasonably safe against attack.

What about entries? All right, because by winning the first trick in dummy and ducking twice, declarer can retain an entry in the shape of the ace of diamonds.

Finally, there is what problem-setters sometimes call the 'echelon factor'. This means, if you test one suit and it goes badly, can you fall back on the other? Here, if the diamonds turn out to be 4—1, you still have the chance of finding the clubs 3—3, with the queen well placed. Thus again it is better to play on diamonds.

The sequence of play is: win with queen of hearts, duck a diamond; win the heart continuation, duck another diamond. When both opponents follow to this trick you know that the diamonds are established and you have enough tricks for game.