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By JULIAN POTTAGE

Dealer :East Vul :	NORTH ♠ Q1072 ♥ Q109 ♦ KJ63 ♣ K7		
WEST ♠ 4 ♥ J42 ♦ 10874 ♣ J8543	Deal 1	EAST ♠ A9853 ♥ 7 ♦ AQ95 ♣ Q102	
	SOUTH ♠ KJ6 ♥ AK8653 ♦ 2 ♣ A96		

East	South	West	North
1 Spade	2 Heart	Pass	2 Spade*
pass	4 Heart	All Pass	
* Value raise			

You lead the ♠4. Partner wins with the ♠A and returns the ♠9. You ruff South's ♠K. How do you continue?
 You would like to find partner with the ace in one of the minors so that you can score a second ruff. How do you know which to try?
 Your partner's high spade return should be a suit-preference signal for the higher-ranking minor, namely diamonds. You thus continue with the ♦8.

Partner wins the diamond and, knowing that declarer has a third spade left, plays a third round of spades. If a second diamond trick is cashable, it will be available later.

Dealer :North Vul :	NORTH ♠ Q107 ♥ AQ10 ♦ KJ7632 ♣ 7		
WEST ♠ 4 ♥ 742 ♦ 1084 ♣ A108543	Deal 2	EAST ♠ A98532 ♥ J ♦ Q95 ♣ KJ2	
	SOUTH ♠ KJ6 ♥ K98653 ♦ A ♣ Q96		

South	West	North	East
--	--	1 Diamond	1 Spade
2 Heart	Pass	3 Heart	Pass
4 Heart	All Pass		

You lead the ♠4. Partner wins with the ♠A and returns the ♠2. You ruff South's ♠K. How do you continue?

The situation is similar to the previous deal. You have scored one ruff and can score another if you can put partner on lead in one of the minors. Indeed, if partner holds the ♦A, you will not actually need a second ruff. This time, your partner has returned the lowly ♠2 when giving you a ruff. This very small card must be a signal for the lower-ranking minor, namely clubs. (You ignore the trump suit for suit-preference signals.) Since you hold the ♠A yourself, you should read partner for the ♠K. So go on, be brave. Underlead your ♠A.

Partner puts up the ♠K and, when it holds, knows exactly what you have done. A second spade ruff duly defeats the contract.