

Moysian Maintenance

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This deal comes from the Reisinger [Board-a-Match](#) teams at the 2012 NABC. South held:

♠AJ10 ♥KJ5 ♦K2 ♣A10976.

With both sides vulnerable, his partner dealt and passed. RHO opened 3♦. Now what?

There are two sensible calls. One is 3NT and the other is double. I don't like the diamond stopper for 3NT (because you can't hold up). If I held ♦Kxx or even ♦Ax, I'd be more tempted. On the other hand, I'd prefer to have one, if not both four-card majors for a takeout double. I can see arguments either way, so let's go with a double (which is what was chosen by Alan Sontag at the table). LHO passes and partner bids 4♦. Ugh. Do you bid your long club suit (5♣)? Or, choose a 3-card major, and if so, which one?

Right or wrong, Sontag chose to pick his better major, spades and wound up in 4♠ on this layout:

♠Q872  
♥AQ42  
♦4  
♣8542

♠AJ10  
♥KJ5  
♦K2  
♣A10976

You can see that a 3NT overcall would not have worked well. Partner would (should) pass and you'd have no chance after a diamond lead. As to 5♣, that requires 2-2 clubs and the spade finesse. Partner's 4♦ was on the ambitious side. In fact, at the other table, the player with that hand faced the same start and chose to go low with 3♥ and played it there (making). So, a full board rests on whether or not you can make 4♠.

Against 4♠, West leads a diamond to East's ace and back comes the ♣K. Your thoughts?

With East holding some high diamonds and the ♣K, you can be sure the ♠K is offside. That means you need 2-2 clubs. Let's say you win the ♣A, West playing an honor and continue clubs, pleased to see that West started with QJ doubleton. Next comes another diamond. Your plan?

You discard (let's say a club) from dummy and win the ♦K. You know the ♠K is wrong, so it is pointless to cross to dummy for a spade finesse. It would be nice if spades are 3-3. If spades are 5-1 you have no real chance. Say you lay down the ♠A and play another spade. That would be a big mistake. If spades are 4-2 (which is with the odds, especially with East's preempt), you'd be dead. West would hold up his ♠K to leave:

♠Q8  
♥AQ42  
♦--  
♣8

♠10  
♥KJ5  
♦--  
♣976

You can't deal with West's 4th trump. If you play another spade, he wins the king and taps dummy with a diamond, establishing his long trump. If you do anything else, West ruffs in with his small trump. So, how can you handle a 4-2 spade break?

You have to hope that the 4-2 break includes a doubleton-nine with RHO. Then, you have a chance. Just don't prematurely release your ♠A. When starting to draw trump, play the ♠J on the first round. If West takes it, you can ruff a diamond return in hand. Then, lay down your last high spade, cross to dummy in hearts and try the ♠Q. If the suit splits 3-3 or East started with ♠9x, you can draw trump and claim. Dummy's ♠8 saves the day.

What if West ducks the ♠J? Repeat the process by playing the ♠10 next (again, don't release the ♠A). If West ducks, you lay down the ♠A next and just run winners. If West takes his ♠K and plays a diamond, you ruff in hand and proceed as above.

This is exactly how Sontag played it and this was the Real Deal:

♠Q872  
Vul: Both ♥AQ42  
Dir: North ♦4  
♣8542

♠K654	♠93
♥9876	♥103
♦Q109	♦AJ87653
♣QJ	♣K3

♠AJ10  
♥KJ5  
♦K2  
♣A10976