

Dealer: W Vul: E-W	North ♠ A 8 7 4 ♥ 8 2 ♦ K Q 9 ♣ K J 6 3																						
	South ♠ Q J 10 9 5 ♥ J 5 ♦ 3 ♣ A 9 8 4 2																						
Lead: ♥ K Bidding: <table border="1" data-bbox="219 1073 829 1346"> <thead> <tr> <th>WEST</th> <th>NORTH</th> <th>EAST</th> <th>SOUTH</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1 ♥</td> <td>Dbl</td> <td>3 ♥</td> <td>4 ♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td>Pass</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	1 ♥	Dbl	3 ♥	4 ♠	Pass	Pass	Pass											
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By Mike Lawrence

North and South bid to a thin four spades after some modest competitive bidding by East West.

West led the king of hearts and continued with another heart to East's ace. South noted that four spades was going to require a spade finesse plus a good guess in clubs. When East returned the ten of clubs at trick three, South thanked East for solving his club problem. South won with the jack in dummy. South had no club losers now and had only to draw trump.

Alas, South had no way to get back to his hand to take the spade finesse. He tried leading the king of diamonds, hoping to ruff a diamond in his hand but West won the ace and gave East a club ruff. South got to take his spade finesse later, but it was too late. Where did South go wrong? Or was four spades just unmakeable?

Which do you choose?

Four spades should make?

Someone bid too much?

Dealer: W Vul: E-W		North ♠ A 8 7 4 ♥ 8 2 ♦ K Q 9 ♣ K J 6 3	
West ♠ K 2 ♥ K Q 9 7 4 ♦ A J 5 ♣ Q 7 5		East ♠ 6 3 ♥ A 10 6 3 ♦ 10 8 7 6 4 2 ♣ 10	
	South ♠ Q J 10 9 5 ♥ J 5 ♦ 3 ♣ A 9 8 4 2		
Lead: ♥ K			
Bidding:			
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1 ♥	Dbl	3 ♥	4 ♠
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Four spades was cold. South overlooked a crucial point of timing. Given East's ten of clubs was a singleton, it was not necessary to let the lead go to dummy. South should have won with the ace of clubs, finessed in spades, and then later take the morally certain club finesse after trumps were drawn. Not all gifts are as they seem!

A SYSTEMIC ASIDE

Note East's raise to three hearts. After a takeout double, the raise to three hearts is no longer a strong bid. It is better used to show a weak hand with some shape and at least four trump. It may buy the hand or it may allow West to compete further if he has the hand for it. Be sure you have this understanding down pat.

There is an excellent convention that you can use which will remove the need to have the jump raise show a good hand.

1♥ DBL 2NT

When is the last time you bid one heart, heard a takeout double, and had your partner jump to two notrump? You might think that your partner was making a natural notrump bid, but that is not so. If he had a balanced thirteen points, he would start with a redouble. Perhaps a big penalty is available.

If you agree that two notrump has no needed natural meaning, then you might like to play this convention instead.

THE IRREGULAR REDOUBLE

This is just one of many names that this convention has. It works this way.

1♥ DBL 2NT

or

1♠ DBL 2NT

The jump to two notrump over the double says you have the following.

1. Limit raise values or more. If you have a limit raise, you will stop in three of the major unless your partner gets you higher.

2. Four or more trumps. This is one of the 100% rules of bridge. Never make a jump raise with just three trumps. If you have just three trumps, start with a redouble and then raise partner's suit. If the opponents compete, as they often do, your partner's judgment will be better off knowing when you have three trumps and when you have four.

I STRONGLY suggest you use this convention. If you do, then your partner can give a jump raise with a weak hand and can also bid his stronger hands accurately. An excellent combination.