

♠ A Q J

♥ 4 3 2

♦ A 8 4 3

♣ 7 6 5

♠ K 10 9 8

♥ A K Q 5

♦ Q J

♣ Q 9 4

The bidding has gone 1NT – 3NT and West leads a low club from ♣ K 10 x x and the opponents cash the first four club tricks, East discarding a low spade on the fourth club, dummy a low heart. And you, what do you discard on the fourth club?

If you discard a heart you are giving up on 3-3 hearts (36%) but if you discard a diamond, you are giving up on the diamond finesse (50%). Discard a heart.

Also, if East had the ♦K, he might have discarded an encouraging diamond (or signalled for a diamond). Negative inferences go a long way in this game.

The full deal:

♠ A Q J

♥ 4 3 2

♦ A 8 4 3

♣ 7 6 5

♠ 5 4 3

♥ J 7

♦ K 6 5 2

♣ K 10 8 2

♠ 7 6 2

♥ 10 9 8 6

♦ 10 9 7

♣ A J 3

♠ K 10 9 8

♥ A K Q 5

♦ Q J

♣ Q 9 4

Eddie Kantar relates a story about Harold Harkavy, a wonderful bridge player of yesteryear who supported himself financially by playing bridge.

He frequently found himself in some bizarre 3NT contracts because his partners were not allowed to bid notrump!

On one of them this was his diamond stopper – only his contract was 4NT:

	♦ Q J	
♦ A 10 8 3		♦ K 6 5 4
	(Harold)	
	♦ 9 7 2	

Harold had to knock out an ace and knew his opponents would switch to diamonds, so he decided to feign strength in diamonds by leading the ♦Q from dummy with great confidence. It held the trick! Undaunted, he led the jack and that held the trick also. Now it was safe to let the opponents in and Harold made yet another impossible contract. After the hand, he apologised to his partner saying. “Partner, if only I had the ten of diamonds, I could have run the entire suit”!

Here is another example of making thoughtful discards as declarer:

♠ 9 4
♥ 8 3
♦ 8 7 4
♣ A K 8 6 5 4
♠ A K Q J
♥ J 10 9 4
♦ A J 10
♣ 3 2

Partner raises your 1NT opening to 3NT hoping you can use the clubs. West leads a low heart from ♥K Q x x and the opponents play four rounds of hearts. You win the fourth round of hearts, East discarding a discouraging spade. What two discards did you make from dummy and what is your plan?

You have eight top tricks with two possibilities for a ninth. You can duck a club and play for 3-2 clubs (68%), or you can give up on clubs and use your two club entries to take two diamond finesses. If East has one or both diamond honours you can secure the ninth trick in that suit. Which is better?

Two diamond finesses is a better line. When you need one of two finesses to work, you have a 75% chance that at least one will succeed. Even though it may kill you to give up on the club suit, 75% is better than 68%. (hopefully you didn't discard two diamonds from dummy on the third and fourth round of hearts!)

The full deal:

♠ 9 4

♥ 8 3

♦ 8 7 4

♣ A K 8 6 5 4

♠ 10 7 5

♥ K Q 6 2

♦ Q 9

♣ Q 10 9 7

♠ 8 6 3 2

♥ A 7 5

♦ K 6 5 3 2

♣ J

♠ A K Q J

♥ J 10 9 4

♦ A J 10

♣ 3 2