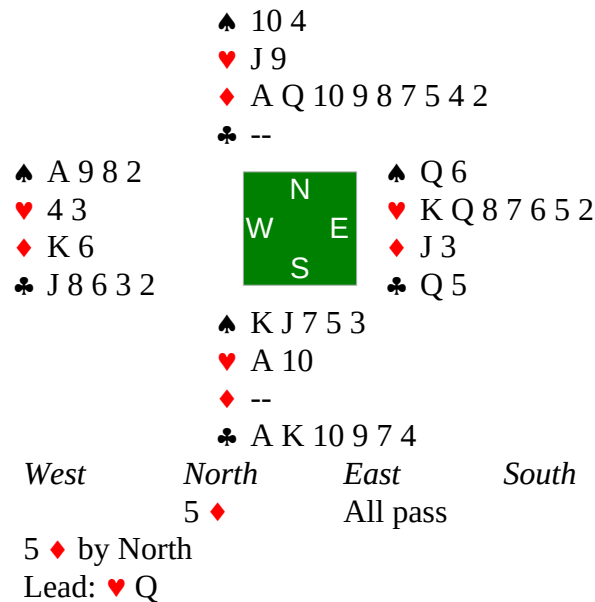


North Deals
None Vul



Nine! 4 Losers! were Linda's first thoughts when she opened this hand. Hands like this tend to get written up and indeed it was written up in The Common Game.

At my table, Karen chose 4 ♦ and I am inferring that Lucille also chose to open 4 ♦.

The first decision by North is what to open. My Cleveland mentor always told me "There is no scientific way to bid distributional hands." 3, 4 or even 5 ♦ could be right or as I prefer to say "could work".

If North chooses to open 4 ♦ should East bid? There are no preempts over preempts. There are a million reasons for East to pass and not allow the hearts to seduce them into bidding, the main one being the hand is way too weak and it has the worst shape of hands with 7 card suits. 7222 is usually a number waiting to happen. So No, East should not bid.

If East passes, what should South do? First off Don't panic. North will usually have 8 (or 7 really good ♦) to open 4 so even though South has no diamonds, they have great cards to cover North's losers. If North has 6 losers, South can cover 3 or 4 of them and South will make.

If East bids 4 ♥ should South call? Partner's 4 ♦ bid usually shows 8 diamonds which leaves only 5 cards outside of diamonds making finding a fit for one of South's suits poor odds. Because of this a bid here by South is often played as lead directing. South could pass, but South has quick tricks and is behind East which will make it really hard for East to make 4 ♥ which are strong reasons to double and defend. You only need to defeat 4 ♥ 2 doubled to do better than 4 ♦ making and 3 to beat any North's making 5 ♦. Finally 5 ♦ is also a consideration. South hand is probably worth at least 6 if not 7 winners. To that total you can most likely contribute 3 or 4 winners for at least 10 and a good chance of 11. Tough choices. If South doubles she only needs to win 5 tricks for 300 which is easier than winning 11 plus South has a strong lead. People do not double enough.

An opening 5 ♦ bid should win the contract. East is too weak to bid, West is too weak to double and South should be delighted to hold a hand that will be useful to North.

Lead

East has a natural heart lead of the K♥. With touching honors lead the top. Interestingly there is only one lead that beats this contract and there is no reason to find it.