

## 8. Failing to use Stayman

The most useful convention of them all is Stayman. Partner opens INT (or 2NT) and you have game-going values (that's 11 or more points facing 12-14). If you have a precisely four-card major, you should seek to locate a 4-4 major fit (unless you're 4333 — too balanced to worry).

You bid 2♣, the Stayman convention that says nothing about clubs. The INT opener bids a four-card major if he's got one (2♥ with both) and 2♦ with no four-card major. Generally, you'll go back to notrumps at the requisite level if no major-suit fit has been found.

### What Happened

West led ♥2 v the unsavoury 3NT, East winning ♥A and returning ♥4 (low from three remaining). West won ♥K and led back ♥6 to East's ♥Q8. Declarer had discarded ♣42 from dummy and (unwisely) ♣5 from hand.

At trick five, East switched to ♣10. In desperation, declarer tried ♣K. West won ♣A and returned ♣8, East winning ♣Q (felling ♣J) and enjoying ♣93. The defence had garnered the first eight tricks — down four.

Declarer should have got the club guess correct (inserting the ♣J not the ♣K) on the grounds East would surely have cashed ♣A if he had it — the setting trick. However, he would have still gone one down.

### What Should Have Happened

After an efficient Stayman auction, South declares 4♠ on the passive ♠9 lead. Declarer draws trumps in

Dealer: South, Vulnerability: Neither

♠ 98	♠ AQ52	♠ 763
♥ K652	♥ J3	♥ AQ84
♦ 10862	♦ AQ73	♦ 95
♣ A86	♣ 742	♣ Q1093
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">           N W   E S         </div>	
	♠ KJ104	
	♥ 1097	
	♦ KJ4	
	♣ KJ5	

### What Happened

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	3NT(1)	end

(1) Mistake. North should bid Stayman to try to find a 4-4 spade fit. As will be clear from this deal, 4-4 fits generally play at least a trick better than Notrumps.

Contract: 3NT, Opening Lead: ♥2

### What Should Have Happened

S	W	N	E
1NT	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♠(1)	end

(1) Happily, expecting 4♠ to play at least a trick better than 3NT (so worth bidding for one more trick to ensure spades are trumps). Here, the difference is five tricks.

Contract: 4♠, Opening Lead: ♠9

three rounds and cashes four rounds of diamonds (♦KJ first), discarding ♣5 from hand. At trick eight, he leads ♣2 from dummy and, when East plays low, guesses to play ♣J (not ♣K), on the grounds West may have led a club from the ♣Q but never from the ♣A (also East may have risen with ♣A — or flinched). The ♣J draws ♣A and the defence win only two heart tricks. Ten tricks and game made. [andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:andrew.robson@thetimes.co.uk)