## 8. Failing to use Stayman

The most useful convention of them all is Stayman. Partner opens INT (or 2NT) and you have gamegoing 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 lNT opener bids a fourcard 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

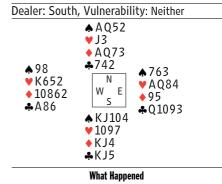
West led ♥2 v the unsavoury 3NT, East winning ♥A and returning ♥4 (low from three remaining). West won ♥K and led back ♥6 to East's ♥Q8. Declarer had discarded ♣42 from dummy and (unwisely) ♣5 from hand.

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



(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.

3NT(1)

F

end

Contract: 3NT , Opening Lead: ♥2

W

Pass

S

1NT

## 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