

January 3, 2026

Bridge with Richard Ward

NORTH		E / EW VUL
♠	8 5	
♥	K 10 5	
♦	A K 6 3	
♣	A K J 9	
WEST		EAST
♠	K 3	♠ A Q J 10 4 2
♥	J 8 6 4 3	♥ 2
♦	10 8 5 4 2	♦ 9
♣	5	♣ 8 7 6 4 3
SOUTH		
♠	9 7 6	
♥	A Q 9 7	
♦	Q J 7	
♣	Q 10 2	

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
			2S
PASS	PASS	DBL	PASS
3H	PASS	3S	PASS
4H	PASS	PASS	PASS

As South would respond with a conventional Lebensohl two no trump on any weak hand (check that out), the actual three-heart response suggests a hand in the 8-11 point range. North asks for a spade stopper by bidding three spades. As South has no spade stopper and no second suit to bid, the only option left is to bid four hearts.

Most declarers tend to panic when they are forced to play in a 4-3 fit. However, there are two simple rules for tackling them: **Rule 1:** If you have lots of winners, look for a plan that maintains control of trumps. **Rule 2:** If you seem to have lots of losers, look for a plan that makes as many trumps as possible from ruffs in both hands. Which of these rules applies here? Fairly clearly it is the first, for you have eleven potential winners. The defenders play three rounds of spades with the third spade ruffed in the dummy. The sole problem is to avoid two trump losers. If trumps break 4-2, you can simply play three rounds from the top, turning then to the minor suits. What can you do to guard against one defender (presumably West) holding five trumps? You should cross to your hand in one of the minors and play a low trump to dummy's ten. Even if this loses to the jack with East, the contract is still assured if trumps are 4-2. As the cards lie, the finesse of the ten pays off as West began with jack to five in the trump suit. After the ten of trumps holds, you cash the king of trumps and come back to hand in the other minor. Draw two more rounds of trumps, throwing a diamond from dummy then run the clubs. West makes just one trump trick to go with the two earlier spade tricks. The recommended line loses when East holds a singleton jack of trumps, but it is five times more likely that a singleton will be small.
