

Declare One No Trump -- Problem

East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K J 9 3 2
♥ J 4 2
♦ J 2
♣ A 4 3



♠ 7 6
♥ K Q 7 5
♦ A Q 10 7 6
♣ 8 2

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♣	1 ♦
1 ♥	1 ♠ ¹	Pass	1 NT

All pass

1. Natural and forcing one round.

1 NT by South

Lead: ♥ 6

Join me as South for this deal from an online matchpoint pairs game. We duck the opening lead on dummy, East follows with the ♥ 10, and we win the king (usually the most deceptive from holdings headed by either A-K or K-Q). Plan the play.

Declare One No Trump -- Solution

East Deals
E-W Vul

♠ K J 9 3 2		♠ A Q 5									
♥ J 4 2		♥ 10									
♦ J 2		♦ K 9 4 3									
♣ A 4 3		♣ K J 10 6 5									
♠ 10 8 4	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> <table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table> </div>		N		W		E		S		♠ A Q 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ A 9 8 6 3		♥ 10									
♦ 8 5		♦ K 9 4 3									
♣ Q 9 7		♣ K J 10 6 5									
	♠ 7 6										
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	♦ A Q 10 7 6										
	♣ 8 2										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♥	1 ♠ ¹	1 ♣	1 ♦
All pass		Pass	1 NT

1. Natural and forcing one round.

1 NT by South
Lead: ♥ 6

Bidding commentary: A Snapdragon double (A-B-C-X, no jumps) was available to show spades with diamond tolerance and competitive strength. Perhaps North forgot, or thought this hand was a little too good for that. Not to worry.

Play commentary: After this favorable opening lead, there is no time for delay: pop a heart right back! When West ducks, to avoid giving us an extra trick in hearts, lead the ♦ J. When East covers, duck! What can they do? Four diamonds, two hearts and a club, making 1 NT.

If West rises with the ♥ A and leads a spade, they can establish a gazillion tricks, but too late. We get three hearts, three diamonds (on the finesse), and a club.

This play in hearts is a variant of the Morton's fork coup, which "forces an opponent to choose between letting declarer establish extra tricks in the suit led; or losing the opportunity to win any trick in the suit led. It takes its name from the expression Morton's fork:

"Under Henry VII, John Morton was made archbishop of Canterbury in 1486 and Lord Chancellor in 1487. He rationalised a benevolence (tax) of Henry's by reasoning that someone living modestly must be saving money, and therefore could afford the benevolence; whereas someone living extravagantly was obviously rich, and therefore could afford the benevolence as well."

- Wikipedia

Two Strong No Trumps -- Problem

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A 6 3 2
♥ K J 9 6 4
♦ Q 4
♣ A K



West *North* *East* *South*

1 NT¹ ?

1. 15-17 HCP, balanced.

Join me as West for this deal from an online matchpoint pairs game. Playing a modified version of Cappelletti, we have these main choices, when South opens a strong 1 NT:

1. Pass.
2. Double: penalties, with an equivalent or better hand.
3. 2 ♣: major suits; with equal length, partner bid 2 ♦, asking us to pick.

What's your choice?

Two Strong No Trumps -- Solution

North Deals
None Vul

	♠ 7					
	♥ 10 8 7 3					
	♦ J 6 3 2					
	♣ 9 8 7 5					
♠ A 6 3 2 ♥ K J 9 6 4 ♦ Q 4 ♣ A K	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 5px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ J 10 8 5 ♥ 5 2 ♦ K 10 5 ♣ Q J 10 6	
N						
W E						
S						
	♠ K Q 9 4					
	♥ A Q					
	♦ A 9 8 7					
	♣ 4 3 2					
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			
	1 NT ¹	2 ♣ ²	Pass			
2 ♠	All pass					
	1. 15-17 HCP, balanced. 2. Major suits.					
	2 ♠ by West					
	Lead: ♣ 4					

Bidding commentary: Pass is for wimps and will probably turn out poorly. Our best source of tricks is clubs, but we would need to guess to unblock before partner's diamond entry is used up.

Double is a similar crap shoot, but with more cash on the table. To get a big score, we would need to set them two doubled, for 300 points. Decent opponents will have a system that gets them to 2 ♦ on this deal.

Lots of matchpoints can be won with penalty doubles, but I don't like the penalty double of 1 NT. Dummy usually has some shape, and gets out a playable fit at the 2-level. Unless partner has most of the outstanding points (as on this deal), we will be stuck.

When we probably have a good contract of our own, that's a better direction. Our 2 ♣ bid is just what the doctor ordered, with the response system that gets us to our best fit. Partner made three spades on a defensive error, for an 86% score. Making only two would still have been worth 67%.

The choice would be unclear playing unmodified Cappelletti, where 2 ♦ shows the majors, and we might land in the wrong one.

Play commentary: South has all the missing points, except maybe the ♦ J. The best line is to cash the top clubs and lead a small trump. When North follows with the ♠ 7, a play for one spade loser is an *intrafinesse*: insert the ♠ 8, hoping North started with 10-7, and South with K-Q-4. However, we play high, because we can defer that decision: we may judge to pin that mythical nine by leading high for a regular finesse later.

South wins and leads ... probably a club. Partner made it to hand, and leads a heart. South is in trouble, and eventually errs by leading trumps, granting us the overtrick.