

## An Extra Notrump -- Problem

**Board 19**  
East Deals  
N-S Vul



♠ A K J 10 6 4  
♥ A Q  
♦ Q 8 7 2  
♣ 10

*(deal rotated for convenience)*

Playing in a club duplicate, we open 1 ♠, and partner responds 2 ♣, forcing to game. What's our rebid?

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Several rebids appeal. If 2 ♠ promised extra length, that would be acceptable. This was the bid at the table, although we were playing the more sensible treatment that 2 ♠ is a catch-all, denying the ability to bid a red suit or notrump, or to raise clubs. With our system, 2 ♦ would be better than 2 ♠. With those extra values, there is no reason to suppress the diamond suit, even when playing that 2 ♠ shows extra length.

The main alternative is to rebid in notrump, quite appealing with those red queens. 2 NT or 3 NT?

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2 NT shows a small (normal opening bid) hand, or a large (slam-going) hand. 3 NT shows a medium hand. (Both notrump bids promise hearts are well controlled.) Using the losing trick count (LTC), this hand has 5 losers: one in each suit and a second in diamonds. However, this is a provisional tally, because LTC only applies when we have an 8-card fit. While a 5-loser hand would be worth a jump to game opposite a semi-constructive (2- to 3-winner) single raise, the ♦ Q is suspect. It would be more secure if supported by the jack or even the ten. Based on the bidding so far, this is a medium hand. It has an extra spade, but no club fit. If choosing a notrump rebid, choose three. On this deal, that would end the auction.

Large hand opposite small hand slams are easy to explore. Medium-medium slams are hard: neither partner is strong enough to take charge. What sometimes happens - and did happen on this deal - is a medium partner makes a slam try, and the medium-small partnership rides this juggernaut into a bad slam. That's why a 3 NT rebid is such a standout here.

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Our spades are not quite good enough for a jump to 3 ♠, which would set trump, even opposite a void. Over our actual 2 ♠, partner bids 3 ♦. What is that, and what do we bid next?

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3 ♦ promises a stopper and denies a heart stopper, for 3 NT. Partner probably has fewer than six clubs. Unwilling to bid only 3 NT, we bid an optimistic 4 NT, and play there. Had partner accepted the slam invitation with 5 ♣, showing a fifth club, we could then bid 5 ♦, showing four, and 6 ♦ might be played.

The opening lead is the ♣ 8. It's ominous that a red suit was not led. If the club finesse loses, a heart will come whistling through. We win the ace, East following with the ♣ 5. On our lead of the ♠ 9, East discards the ♣ 2. West wins the ♠ Q and exits with a small spade. Plan the play - be specific.

An Extra Notrump -- Solution

**Board 19**  
 East Deals  
 N-S Vul

♠ 9 3		♠ —									
♥ 9 7 5		♥ J 8 3 2									
♦ A 4 3		♦ J 9 6									
♣ A K J 7 6		♣ Q 9 5 4 3 2									
♠ Q 8 7 5 2	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ —
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W		E									
	S										
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♦ K 10 5		♦ J 9 6									
♣ 8		♣ Q 9 5 4 3 2									
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	♦ Q 8 7 2										
	♣ 10										

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♣	Pass	2 ♠
Pass	3 ♦	Pass	4 NT
All pass			
4 NT by South			
Lead: ♣ 8			

The opening lead is the ♣ 8. It's ominous that a red suit was not led. If the club finesse loses, a heart will come whistling through. We win the ace, East following with the ♣ 5. On our lead of the ♠ 9, East discards the ♣ 2. West wins the ♠ Q and exits with a small spade.

Yes, 4 NT can be made with all four finesses losing, even with a club, the most difficult lead. We have nine tricks and need but one more. We make the contract if West leads a red suit. Play off all the spades, discarding small cards, reducing the deals to:

♠ -	♥ 9 7	♦ A 4	♣ K J		
♠ -	♥ K 10 6	♦ K 10 5	♣ -	♠ -	♥ J   ♦ J 9 6   ♣ Q 9
	♠ -	♥ A Q	♦ Q 8 7 2	♣ -	

Lead a diamond to dummy's ace. Cash the ♣ K, pitching a diamond.

-- If West now holds ♥ K-10 ♦ K-10, play a heart to the ace, and exit with the ♥ Q. The ♦ Q wins the last trick.

-- If West now holds ♥ K-10-6 ♦ K, play a diamond. West wins and must lead a heart. If we played low on the diamond, we make an overtrick!

-- If West now holds ♥ K ♦ K-10-5, play a heart to the ace, dropping the king.

West's only chance lies in confusion, so we pay close attention, to be able to read the end position. If we do indeed get confused, a heart to the ace wins in two cases.