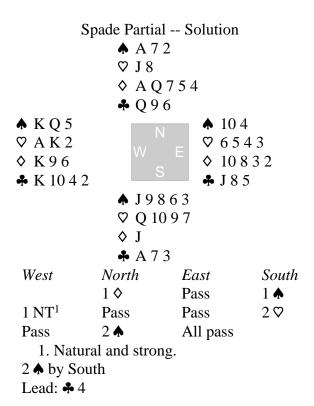
North Deals E-W Vul

Spade Partial -- Problem **♠** A 7 2 ♥ J 8 ♦ AQ754 ♣ Q 9 6 **♠** J9863 ♥ Q 10 9 7 ♦ J ♣ A 7 3 West North East South 1 💠 Pass 1 $1 \, NT^1$ Pass 2♥ Pass Pass 2 🖈 All pass 1. Natural and strong. 2 ♠ by South

Lead: ♣4

Plan the play at matchpoint pairs.

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West will have most of the outstanding points, surely including both high spades and the one high diamond.

We have an immediate choice in the club suit: play the queen or not. In the diagram, it's just possible that the ♣ K and ♣ J are switched. That's not the way to bet - call for the ♣ Q on the lead - it wins! Now what?

Call for a small spade from dummy, and when East plays low, insert the \clubsuit 8. This *intrafinesse* works - West wins with the king or queen. The \clubsuit King comes back - win with the ace. Now, the \diamondsuit J, covered with the king. Win the \diamondsuit A and cash the queen (pitching our last club). Now the \heartsuit J, going for our two heart tricks. West wins (ducking won't help), and makes us ruff a club.

Now we lead the ♠ J. If West covers, the ace drops East's ten. Otherwise, the ♠ J will win. Either way, we draw the last trump. With one trump left in hand, and a heart still on dummy, we knock out the remaining heart honor. Making four, losing one trump and two hearts.

At the table, I was not so bold. I played small on the opening club lead, and thus made only three. The intrafinesse still produced a tie for top.