

Along with sixty or seventy other Canberra bridge players, I made the trip to Orange last week to play in their annual bridge festival. After five days straight of bridge, all of the hands tend to blur together. However, there was one hand in the final set which illustrates an interesting feature of hands with a double fit.

♠ AQ6

♥ AT7

♦ QT8

♣ AQ54

♠ KJT985

♥ void

♦ A954

♣ K983

At our table, like many in the room, we bid to Six Spades and received the lead of a small heart. With all the suits breaking, we could retain control of hearts, draw trumps, cash our clubs but unfortunately were left with needing to guess the diamond position.

If our RHO had the King and Jack of Diamonds, we were doomed. If our LHO had both honours then we couldn't go wrong. The situation we needed to think about was who had which honour in the common case where they were split. If the King is to our left we need to lead low to the Queen. If instead they hold the Jack we need to insert the ten. What to do....?

Luckily for us, it didn't matter as our LHO did indeed have both missing honours – we couldn't guess it wrong! But it does illustrate an interesting thing that often comes up in hands with a double fit. Imagine we had chosen to play not in Spades but in Clubs – our second fit.

The same thing would have happened. We would retain control of the hearts, draw trumps in three rounds and then cash our spades. But this time as we cash our five card spade suit, we can throw a diamond and a heart from dummy and now we only lose one Diamond, no matter who holds which honour. (In fact, we can easily make *Seven Clubs* by trumping two hearts before drawing trumps).

What this hand shows is the value of choosing a four-four fit in preference to a five-three fit. You can (usually) score the same number of trump tricks with either. But as a side suit, five opposite three allows us to discard two losers as we cash five tricks. A side suit made up of four opposite four leaves us one trick short.

Of course, it can be hard to choose a minor over a major. But keep this in mind next time you learn during the auction that you have a five-three fit in one major and a four-four fit in the other. Often you will do one trick better by choosing the second suit.