

68. Balancing Notrump

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♠ AJ109 ♥ 2 ♦ AQ83 ♣ K1032		♠ 862 ♥ 87654 ♦ J92 ♣ 98
♠ K75 ♥ KJ109 ♦ K7 ♣ A654		♠ Q43 ♥ AQ3 ♦ 10654 ♣ QJ7

W	N	E	S
1♣	P!	P	INT
P	2♣	P	2♦
P	3NT	All Pass	

--North South Vulnerable--

The bidding:

West with 14 high card points opens the bidding with one club. North also has a good opener but does not have a call other than pass. He cannot double because he does not have the correct shape because of the singleton in one of the unbid suits. He elects not to overcall one diamond because he does not have five diamonds and he has four spades. One can still find a major fit after overcalling another suit, but it is better to pass if partner will balance.

South balances with one notrump which shows a balanced 11 to 14 points and one or more club stoppers. He is unlikely to have four-four in the majors but could have elected to use one notrump, a very descriptive bid. With 15 to 18, he would have doubled then bid notrump.

After a balancing notrump transfers and Stayman are not necessarily on. That depends on partnership agreement. I think they should be on only for bidding consistency. North shows a four-card major by bidding two spades and South has none so they play in three notrump.

The contract: Three notrump by South

The opening lead: The jack of hearts

The jack of hearts is the top of an interior sequence. This lead is only meant for notrump which works here because East is never getting in to lead hearts through declarer and West has to take the initiative. North and South have 25 or 26 points leaving a jack for East. However, West, with all of his 14 points, will only get in with the ace of clubs.

The play:

South wins the opening lead with the queen and plays a club. West wins the ace and plays the king of hearts which holds. Declarer should always be in the habit of holding up his winner in opponents suit. If declarer had twelve tricks off of the top, he would not hold up however.

South wins the next trick and plays spades. The finesse works. It should be noted that declarer left clubs alone after losing to the ace for transportation. South takes the diamond finesse, which he knows will work from the bidding. The king falls under the ace and South cashes out.

He gets three clubs, two hearts, four spades and two diamonds for eleven tricks. He can't let East in with the jack of diamonds because, although hearts are blocked, they can still cash one more heart trick keeping declarer to three notrump just making.

The result: Three notrump making plus two for +660.