

## Threading a Major Nightmare

**Board 2**  
East Deals  
N-S Vul

	♠ Q J		
	♥ 2		
	♦ J 10 8 7 6		
	♣ A Q J 7 3		
♠ A 10 7 5 3 ♥ 10 9 ♦ A 3 ♣ 10 9 5 4		♠ 8 4 2 ♥ A K J 8 6 3 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ K	
	♠ K 9 6		
	♥ Q 7 5 4		
	♦ Q 9 2		
	♣ 8 6 2		

EW 4♠; EW 3♥; EW 1N; NS 2♦; NS 2♣; Par -420

West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>		<i>Andrew</i>	
		1♥	Pass
1♠	2♦	Dbl <sup>1</sup>	Pass
2♠	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♠	All pass		

1. Support double: exactly 3♠, may have extra values  
 4♠ by West  
 Lead: ♥2  
 Made 4 — EW +420

A nightmare hand is holding six cards in your own suit, and three cards in the suit of partner's one-level response. Opener usually has to guess the best rebid, which could end the auction. Since both majors are involved on this deal, it's a major nightmare.

East's support double resolves the issue here: West would usually rebid 2♠ only when holding five spades. West has no trouble accepting East's game try with two aces, planning to establish East's hearts. East laid out the plan to everybody; North's heart lead was basically giving up. West still had to make 4♠, holding the losers to two trumps and one club. 4♥ cannot be made, because those three tricks must be lost, plus a heart.

Declarer won the lead on dummy and ducked a trump into North, who was powerless. He cashed the ♣A and exited in diamonds (♣Q would have been stronger). Declarer won in hand with the ♦K, cashed the ♠A, and set up the hearts, using the marked ruffing finesse. While it does not matter on the actual layout, declarer is careful to reenter dummy with the ♦A. Ruffing a club to dummy might permit North to ruff with the high defensive trump and cash one or more clubs. Since South has the high trump and four hearts, nothing the defense can do will prevent declarer from losing one club, pitching two, and either pitching or ruffing the last.

A diamond lead does not expose the singleton, and prepares to attack dummy's ♦A entry, all to no avail. Declarer can even make the contract on this specific layout, playing wide open: win the ♦K in hand, cash the ♠A, and duck a spade. When North cannot cash the last trump (to be followed by three clubs), the defense is finished. This is an incredibly fortunate layout for declarer.

3♥ is a great partscore, virtually unbeatable when spades split 4-1. That's why many Easts would rebid 2♥, eschewing the support double on three small. At the table, East was swinging for the fences, with his game try on a minimum hand (3+1+2+1 = 7 losers, and 11 working HCP, the ♣K being paste).

*(continues)*

## Major Nightmare Deal Revised

**Board 2**  
East Deals  
N-S Vul

	♠ Q J											
	♥ 2											
	♦ J 10 8 7 6											
	♣ A Q J 7 3											
♠ A 10 7 5 3 ♥ 10 9 ♦ A 3 ♣ 10 9 5 4	<table style="border: 1px solid gray; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 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		♠ K 4 2 ♥ A K J 8 6 3 ♦ K 5 4 ♣ 8	
	N											
W		E										
	S											
	♠ 9 8 6											
	♥ Q 7 5 4											
	♦ Q 9 2											
	♣ K 6 2											

EW 6♠; EW 5♥; EW 2N; NS 1♦; EW 1♣; Par -980

West	North	East	South
<i>Pete</i>		<i>Andrew</i>	
		1♥	Pass
1♠ <sup>1</sup>	Pass	1NT <sup>2</sup>	Pass
2♠ <sup>3</sup>	Pass	3♥	Pass
4♠	All pass		

1. 4+ ♠, seldom stronger than invitational.
2. Tucker: exactly 3 ♠, may have extra values.
3. Usually five spades.

4♠ by West

An appropriate 6-loser hand for East would relocate the ♣ K and ♠ K, as shown above. Now a lucky *six* spades can be made!

At the table, North's overcall provided the support double to East, which is clearly correct on the revised deal. What if North were not so helpful, and decided to pass? Andrew and I play Tucker, so we have that covered.

My analysis shows Tucker provides about twice the overall advantage of the Flannery 2♦ opening, which is a little harder to play. About half that benefit is from the Tucker 1NT rebid, and about half from the 5+ card game-forcing 2♠ response, which the Tucker system requires. These methods are described in "Flannery and Major Nightmare Solutions at Bridge" at <https://3nt.xyz/bridge.htm#Articles>.

You can get about half the benefit of Flannery with a simple adjustment: a response of 1♠ to 1♥ may be made on any five cards, but a four card suit must be at least ♠ Q 10 x x. This permits opener to raise or even jump raise on good 3-card support.

1♥ - 1♠ game/slam auctions don't bid well. Do not respond 1♠ on a game-forcing hand unless you have at least a 5-card suit. With only four cards, respond two of a minor; opener must reverse to 2♠ on any four cards; this does not show extra strength, just shape. I like to respond 2 of a minor with a game-forcing 5-5 spades and the minor, especially clubs. I set the game force, and sort trumps later.