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Here's **Board 2**, N-S vul.

♠ AQT9	North <i>Declarer Dummy</i>	♠ KJ52
♥ 4		♥ KQ3
♦ KQJ932		♦ A7
♣ 53	South	♣ AJ74

West	East
	1♣
1♦	2NT
3♣	4♣
4NT	5♦
6♣	Pass

East's 2NT rebid does not deny four Spades (unlike a 1NT rebid). So, West tries 3♣ next, perhaps planning to boot out 6♦ if there is no Spade fit. But, there is a Spade fit, allowing West to reach slam via Roman Key Card.

6♣ is the place to be, making 12 tricks when trumps are 3-2. 12 tricks are also there with 4-1 trumps, provided that North's opening lead is not a Club. On the actual deal, the bad news is that North has five trumps. Yikes! But there's also some good news. Again, provided the lead is not a Club, Declarer still makes his slam! For example:

**Win the Spade lead in hand with the Ten**

Lose to North's ♥A

**Win Spade continuation in hand with the Nine**

Cash the ♣A and ♥K

**Run the Diamonds**

Mercifully, North has a second Diamond, and is helpless. She will ruff the third round and get overruffed, but now Declarer can pull the remaining trumps and run the Diamonds. Nicely done for 12 tricks!

On **Board 3**, it pays to bid a lot!

E-W Vul	♠ 7	
	♥ KQJT5	
	♦ QT7653	
	♣ 3	
♠ AKQ82	North	♠ T543
♥ 84	West	♥ A62
♦ 2	East	♦ A4
♣ J8752	South	♣ AQ64
	♠ J96	
	♥ 973	
	♦ KJ98	
	♣ KT9	

West	North	East	South
1♠ <sup>A</sup>	2♠ <sup>B</sup>	3♥ <sup>C</sup>	Pass <sup>D</sup>
3♠ <sup>E</sup>	4♦ <sup>F</sup>	4♥ <sup>G</sup>	5♦ <sup>H</sup>
5♠ <sup>I</sup>	Pass <sup>J</sup>	Pass	Pass <sup>J</sup>

**A.** West has only 10 HCP and not much in the way of defense. Nonetheless the hand passes the Rule of 20, so by that measure at least, it's an opening bid. We rather like 1♠, others will prefer a Weak Two, but let's hope that nobody passed this hand, the suit is too good for that!

**B.** 2♠ was Michaels, showing Hearts and a minor. At favorable vulnerability, and with that lovely 6-5 shape, North is planning to compete up to the 4- or 5-level.

**C.** 3♥ is a cue-bid of North's only known suit, and shows Spade support and at least game-invitational values.

**D.** South has an amorphous blob of a hand, with nothing worth saying at this point in the proceedings.

**E.** West might have been tempted to go to game with his shapely hand, but that might be a bit much, and might get Partner over-excited. So he settles for 3♣.

**F.** North expects East to go on 4♣, and assuming that this makes, at this vulnerability, N-S can afford to be doubled down three. At the 5-level, this requires only 8 tricks, which seems more than likely if N-S have a fit. North's 4♦ bid here was not especially bold, and she might well have bid 5♦ instead, exerting maximum pressure on the opponents.

**G.** East might have been tempted to make a slam try of 4♥ with that hand. But perhaps not quite good enough.

**H.** South has little or no defense to 4♣, and fully expects 5♦ to be a profitable save.

**I.** It may seem inconsistent for West to bid only 3♣ (non-forcing) earlier, and now to bid 5♠ "in front of" Partner. But West's hand is purely offensive, with little or nothing on defense, so 5♠ is reasonable enough.

**J.** It turns out that 5♠ makes 11 tricks and that, in Diamonds, N-S lose just the four Aces. That being so, 6♦ would be a good save here. But it's hard for either East or West to find that save, the conventional wisdom being that "the five-level belongs to the opponents". So E-W will probably be satisfied that they have pushed E-W up one level, and will hope that they can actually beat 5♣.

You are in the North seat on **Board 16**, holding:

♠ AK87 ♥ KJ84 ♦ AQ ♣ KQJ

You **open 2♣**, planning to rebid 2NT, showing 22-23 HCP. But that plan is for naught when South responds 2♥, natural and positive. Some still play that this absolutely requires “two-of-the-top-three” in Hearts, but perhaps that can be relaxed a little (all the more so now that many of us play **Roman Key Card**, a convention which is so adept at ferreting out the King and Queen of trumps). Even so, let’s maintain *some* standards, and, for example, there’s no reason to make a positive response with ♥Axxxx and no side-suit controls.

Anyway, North raises to 3♥, after which she expects South to **cue-bid**. It would be overly restrictive for South only to be allowed to cue-bid an Ace here, as most of the time she won’t have one and will therefore be obliged to waste loads of bidding space with a 4♥ bid. As it happens, South, despite feeling free to cue-bid a King in this situation, bids 4♥ anyway. That presumably denies both the missing side-suit controls (♣A and ♦K). Should North push on to 6♥? The train of thought might be as follows:

- It’s a rotten shame that South will declare 6♥, as an opening Diamond lead puts the contract in immediate jeopardy.
- Even if West does not lead a Diamond, Declarer will need the Diamond finesse to work if she is to get any Diamond ruffs in Dummy.
- Without counting the Diamond finesse, and therefore also without any Diamond ruffs, North can count on only 10 tricks (assuming 5 Hearts).
- What is needed are some “extras” from South, if the Diamond finesse is to be avoided.

Our suggested bid (after South’s 4♥) is 5♥, looking for said extras from South, who happens to have:

♠ Q42 ♥ AQ9752 ♦ 86 ♣ T4

South indeed has extras, with a sixth Heart and the ♠Q, and should push on to 6♥. But the auction is not over yet! North now bids 6NT, protecting the ♦AQ from the opening lead. That turns out to be a necessary precaution, because the ♦K is indeed offside, and 6♥ goes down if West leads Diamonds (Spades are 4-2, by the way, so it doesn’t help Declarer to play Dummy’s ♦A at Trick 1).

The full auction: 2♣ 2♥, 3♥ 4♥, 5♥ 6♥, 6NT.

If you managed to get to 6NT played by the North side then you did very well indeed. If you played 6♥ from the South side, hopefully you did not get a Diamond lead.

Are you familiar with the intra-finesse? Read on.

**Board 18**

	♠ T4 ♥ J843 ♦ 874 ♣ T532	Dlr East N-S Vul
♠ A8763 ♥ AT6 ♦ KJ6 ♣ K8	North  Declarer Dummy  South	♠ Q95 ♥ K97 ♦ QT53 ♣ A74
	♠ KJ2 ♥ Q52 ♦ A92 ♣ QJ96	

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♣
1♣	Pass	2♣	Pass
4♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

Perhaps West’s bidding was a bit impatient, he might have investigated 3NT. But, there he is, or rather, there you are, declaring 4♣, after North’s opening lead of the Club Two. Let us say that you win in hand. Now, how do you play the trump suit?

Without other clues, you would cash the Ace and lead towards the Queen, but let’s not forget the auction. South opened the bidding and has just about all of the missing HCP, including the ♠K. As South has the ♠K, you might consider cashing the ♠A and then playing a low Spade from both hands. That works splendidly if South has the doubleton King, but horribly if she has ♠KJT<sub>x</sub>. Is there an alternative way to play this **suit combination**?

Yes, consider the intra-finesse. Instead of cashing the ♠A on the first round of the suit, you lead a low Spade from hand and finesse Dummy’s Nine. South wins the Jack and let’s say that she exits with a Heart which you win in Dummy. Now the winning play on the second round of trumps is to lead the Queen from Dummy! That cleverly squashes North’s Ten and brings in the trump suit for one loser! The bottom line is 11 tricks!

It’s true, South might have had the aforementioned doubleton King, in which case Declarer does better to lead a low Spade from Dummy on the second round. But you know the old rule, of course: “If you have a choice of more or less equal plays, then choose the one which might get your name in the newspaper”. In this case, that play is the spectacular intra-finesse.