Dummy
♠ 865
♥ 10983
♦ Q10542
♣ A

You
♠ Q943
♥ 765
♦ KJ3
♣ K43

Your left hand opponent opens 1NT, followed by 3 passes. Your partner leads the 2 of hearts. What is declarer's exact distribution?

Don't give up as this being too hard! Here are a couple of hints to get you started:

- There are 13 cards in each suit. Since you know how many you have between you and the dummy, if you can deduce how many cards partner has in a suit, you can calculate how many cards declarer has in that suit.
- How many hearts does declarer have?
- How many clubs does declarer have?

You may make the following assumptions:

- You are playing 4th best leads.
- Your partner led his longest suit.

Send your answers to me: bilpuzzles@bridgesights.com

The Answer

Thanks to those of you who sent in an answer. Most of you correctly deduced that declarer's likely distribution is 3 spades, 2 hearts, 3 diamonds, and 5 clubs. I will quote the email from "Salty Warren" which was particularly well expressed:

Assuming partner has led 4th from his longest and strongest suit, we know partner has exactly 4 hearts. (Good thing he didn't lead the 3, or we wouldn't know for sure!). With 4 hearts on the board and 3 in my hand, this means that declarer has 2 hearts.

The next interesting suit to look at is clubs. We can only see 4 clubs (3 in our hand, 1 on the board), so there are 9 clubs between partner and declarer. However, the highest amount of clubs partner could possibly have is 4; with 5 clubs, he would have led a club instead of a heart. This means that declarer must have at least 5 clubs.

If declarer had MORE than 5 clubs, then in my opinion his hand is not balanced, and he would open 1 club rather than 1 notrump. (The most balanced distribution you can get with a 6 card suit is 6-3-2-2 - not exactly ideal notrump shape.) Ergo, declarer has exactly 5 clubs, and partner has exactly 4 clubs.

So declarer has 2 hearts, and 5 clubs.

In my opinion, there are only 3 distributions I want to open 1NT with - 4-3-3-3, 4-4-3-2 and 5-3-3-2. Since I see 5 clubs and 2 hearts, I'm going to conclude that declarer also has 3 spades and 3 diamonds.

Naturally, I'll keep my eyes open as declarer plays the hand. I'm not totally convinced that declarer wouldn't bid 1NT in a less balanced hand. For now, though, I have a good working theory.