

A RELUCTANT 3NT CONTRACT

You are non-vulnerable while your opponents are vulnerable. You are the dealer in the South seat:

♠ QJ6542
♥ 10
♦ 63
♣ A1083

Would you open? I think you should. Your spades are not bad. Half your points are in the the 6-card suit. You have an outside ♣A and the singleton heart. Your bid would be 2♠. Unfortunately, you hear your partner respond 3♥. The opponents are silent. What do you do now?

Normally, when you open with a weak two bid, you shouldn't bid again. Your partner's change of suit is normally forcing, though. He probably has a good hand with lots of hearts and not many spades. Your choices are to pass, raise to 4♥, or bid 3NT. You might take the chance for a 3NT game. Transportation may be a problem. But you do have the outside club entry and partner should have a good heart suit that could give you 6 tricks off the top.

This is the bidding – for better or worse:

West	North	East	South
			2♠
Pass	3♥	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

West leads the ♦Q and this dummy comes down. Plan the play:

	North
	♠ K
	♥ AKJ854
	♦ A72
	♣ J72
West	
♦Q	
	♠ QJ6542
	♥ 10
	♦ 63
	♣ A1083

Dummy provided the hand you pretty much expected. You might have 3 or 4 hearts, 3 or 4 spades, a diamond and 2 clubs. The hand seems makeable. You should duck the first two diamonds, catering to a 5-3 split. On the third trick, West switches to a club.

You win the ♣A and lead the ♥10 to the dummy, expecting to finesse against the ♥Q. West puts the ♥Q on the first trick. Uh-oh. This looks like a singleton, in which case, you have only 3 heart tricks.

You win the ♥A and play the ♥K to confirm the bad news. You play the ♠K to unblock the spades and knock out the ♠A. West wins and leads a club. You unblock with the ♣J and East wins his ♣K. East returns a diamond, attempting to clear the dummy's diamond suit. You win the ♦A and take the ♥J, noticing that West discards a spade. Now you exit with the small club to your ♣10. Your top spades are now good.

East made a mistake after he took the ♣K. Had he returned a spade, he would have locked you in your hand and you would have been unable to take the ♥J and ♦A in the dummy. You would have had to play all the spades from your hand and West would have taken the third spade.

Here is the entire deal:

3 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ K ♥ AKJ854 ♦ A72 ♣ J72	P 3♥ P 2♠ P P P 3NT
W West		E East
♠ A983 ♥ Q ♦ QJ98 ♣ 9654		♠ 107 ♥ 97632 ♦ K1054 ♣ KQ
	S South	
	♠ QJ6542 ♥ 10 ♦ 63 ♣ A1083	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link:

<http://tinyurl.com/jf6xp7d> , or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the “Next” button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on “Play” you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.