

A TEXTBOOK DEFENSE

Consider this hand:

	North	
	♥5	
West		East
Declarer		♠106
		♥106
		♦AQJ653
		♣A32
	South (You)	
	♠952	
	♥AQ3	
	♦K874	
	♣1084	

The bidding is:

West	North	East	South
		1 ♦	Pass
1 ♠	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
3NT	All Pass		

North made the standard lead of the 4th highest heart, his longest suit. If you were South, what would you play to this trick?

If you would play “third hand high”, the ♥A, you would be wrong. If you did, then you would return the ♥Q, the top of your doubleton, and declarer would duck. Your third heart would be won by the ♥K and when you get in with the ♦K, you will have no more hearts to return. If your partner held the ♥K, it wouldn't make a difference which card you played. So you should assume West holds the ♥K and play the ♥Q smoothly. If he could see the cards in your hand, he would duck. But not being clairvoyant, it would be very difficult for him to not win the

♥K when he could. Now he will set up those diamonds and you will win the ♦K and return to the hearts. You lead the ♥A and another heart and you will have 4 hearts and the diamond, to defeat the contract.

This is the entire hand:

	North	
	♠J743	
	♥J9854	
	♦9	
	♣K96	
West		East
♠AKQ8		♠106
♥K72		♥106
♦102		♦AQJ653
♣QJ75		♣K104
	South	
	♠952	
	♥AQ3	
	♦K874	
	♣1084	

West has a normal 1NT opening hand, so when his partner opened and rebid diamonds, showing a minimum 13-15 points, West jumped to 3NT.

Notice that if East were playing a “weak” notrump range (12-14) he would have opened 1NT and West would have raised him to 3NT. Now you would be on lead and you never would have led a heart. Any other lead allows them to make 3NT easily.

The moral: Don't follow your guides blindly. Look for exceptions based on the lay of the cards involved.