

A CHOICE OF CONTRACTS

You are the dealer with this hand:

South
 ♠ AKQ6
 ♥ QJ5
 ♦ J54
 ♣ KQ7

You count 18 HCP. Your plan is to open 1♣ and then rebid 2NT to show a hand too strong to open 1NT. But your partner responds 1♠. Things are looking even better. You already know you have an 8-card major suit fit. RHO overcalls 2♥. Now what do you do?

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	2♥	1♣ ??

East's overcall at the 2-level should show an 11+ point hand with at least a 5-card heart suit. You have several choices. You can rebid 3NT to show 18-19 point balanced hand. You could support spades with a jump to 3♠ to show the strong hand. The third option is to rebid 3♥. This is a cue bid that tends to show a hand with extra values and is thus, forcing. It also tends to deny a stopper in the opponents suit and asks partner to bid notrump if he has that heart stopper. In effect, it asks partner to say something else about his hand. It's a delaying bid and allows you to make up your mind on the next round with more information.

The trouble with supporting spades is that the shape of your hand is so flat. There will be no opportunity to ruff North's losers; and if he also has a flat hand, he will be unable to rid himself of many losers in the non-trump suits. Ten tricks are a lot of tricks to take, even with no spade losers.

After the 3♥ cuebid, partner rebids 3NT. He is showing a stopper in hearts that will go along nicely with your ♥QJ. Your options are to pass 3NT or bid 4♠. My choice would be to play in the easier contract and pass.

East leads a low heart. Take over for North and plan your play in 3NT.

	South
	♠ AKQ6
	♥ QJ5
	♦ J54
	♣ KQ7
East: ♥6	
	North
	♠ J10743
	♥ K8
	♦ K108
	♣ J106

Taking a look at North's hand, it would be entirely possible that he would have passed your jump to 3♠. He has 5 spades but they are lacking the top 3 honors. His kings are vulnerable, sitting under the heart overcaller.

You count your top tricks. Since you are missing three aces, you only have the 5 top spade tricks and the heart trick, given the lead. You can develop another heart and two clubs once you knock out the two aces. If the opponents attack diamonds, though, you are vulnerable there. You have only 1 stopper if the ♦A is in East, as it most likely is. Start in on the clubs. West takes the fist trick with the ♣A and East shows out. West leads back the ♦Q to the ♦K and ♦A. East takes his ♥A and exits with the ♥10. You can claim the rest of the tricks – making four. Incidentally, 4♠ just makes, but you score 10 points less and in matchpoint scoring, will be the difference between an average and a top score.

Here is the entire hand:

11 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ J10743 ♥ K8 ♦ K108 ♣ J106	P 1♠ 2♥ 3♥ P 3NT P P P
W West		E East
♠ 85 ♥ 92 ♦ Q3 ♣ A985432		♠ 92 ♥ A107643 ♦ A9762 ♣
	S South	
	♠ AKQ6 ♥ QJ5 ♦ J54 ♣ KQ7	3NT N NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/oq822rg> , 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.

