

## COUNTING LENGTH IN NOTRUMP

Your partner opens 1NT and this is your hand:

<b>N</b>	North
♠	J106
♥	976
♦	AQ542
♣	J5

At a recent game, my partner held this hand and passed. I played the hand in 1NT. This was a case of bad hand evaluation. He had 8 HCP and said he didn't like the doubleton ♣J5, so subtracted a point. Would you agree?

Yes, the clubs represent a "dubious doubleton" but the diamond suit was worth more than the 5 points he gave it. First, he has two honors working together. Either his partner holds the ♦K and the suit runs – or if the ♦K is outstanding, it is finessable with a 50% probability. I would put the hand at a good 9 total points: 1 point for the 5<sup>th</sup> diamond and ½ point for the two working honors in the diamond suit. It is certainly worth an invitation to 2NT. Personally, when holding 9 points against an opening 1NT, I almost always force to game. True, you may have only 24 points, but there is a 67% probability that there will be a total of 25 or 26 points. Furthermore, 3NT is often made with 24 points because of a fortuitous lead or a misplay by the defense. All of these fortunate events took place in this hand.

Take over for South and plan the play with a ♣6 lead.

<b>N</b>	North
♠	J106
♥	976
♦	AQ542
♣	J5

West leads the ♣6

<b>S</b>	South
♠	Q3
♥	AJ53
♦	KJ76
♣	A98

You start with 7 top tricks thanks to that great 5 card diamond suit. You can always force a spade trick by promoting the ♠10. There is no reason not to put up the ♣J on the first trick and you find it holds. That's 9 total tricks.

While in the dummy, lead the low spade to your hand. East plays low and West does best to duck. That's your 9<sup>th</sup> trick so you return the diamonds, forcing the opponents to discard from their long suits. If you are lucky, you will take your 9 tricks and throw them in and get a free heart finesse.

I took 10 tricks on this deal and we had only 23 HCP between us! Actually, East could have beaten the contract by going up with his ♠K on the first spade lead from the dummy. Then he could lead his remaining club and the clubs would be reading to run when West gets in with his ♠A. This is a hard play for any East to make.

This is the entire deal:

14	<b>N</b> North	W	N	E	S
	♠ J106 ♥ 976 ♦ AQ542 ♣ J5	P	3NT	P	1NT P
<b>W</b> West	<b>E</b> East				
♠ A85 ♥ K84 ♦ 10 ♣ KQ7643	♠ K9742 ♥ Q102 ♦ 983 ♣ 102				
<b>S</b> South					
♠ Q3 ♥ AJ53 ♦ KJ76 ♣ A98	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0				

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y8cveexk>, 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.