

COUNTING OUT THE FOUR HANDS

Your partner dealt and passed. You hold this hand.

S	South
♠	AJ83
♥	K42
♦	KJ2
♣	K43

You were planning on opening 1NT, but before you could, East opened 1♦. What would you do?

You could overcall 1NT. You have a diamond stopper. When I played this hand, I doubled. I have tolerance (at least 3 cards) for whatever suit partner names. Playing part score in a 4-3 fit isn't that bad. Partner might even have 5 cards in the suit he names.

West passed my takeout double and my partner jumps to 2♠. This showed 10-12 points and at least 4 spades. East passed and it was back to me. I do have 15 HCP so it's conceivable that I have enough for game. However, I have a few negatives. I have the worst shape in bridge: 4-3-3-3. I am also missing 3 aces and my kings are sitting alone in the rounded suits. Furthermore, there is no source of tricks outside the spade suit.

I decided to invite with 3♠. If partner has some extras he can raise to game. If he passes, that might be as high as we belong. Partner, in fact, raised to 4♠.

East led the ♥Q. Take over for North and plan the play.

S	South
♠	AJ83
♥	K42
♦	KJ2
♣	K43

East led the ♥Q

N	North
♠	Q10964
♥	A75
♦	Q3
♣	Q106

You have a heart loser, a diamond loser, 1 or 2 club losers and you could lose the ♠K. When the opponents are involved in the bidding, often their bids give hints to the right plays. In this case we know that East opened and therefore holds at least 12 HCP. Adding up the total points between you and partner, you arrive at 25 HCP. That limits West to a maximum of 3 points. He could have the ♠K, but it is more likely that he has less than 3 points and his points are scattered in jacks and queens in the other suits. Luckily, the spade finesse is only available through East, so you plan to take it immediately when you win the first heart in your hand. Lead the ♠Q, followed by the ♠10 and ♠9 until the ♠K appears, which you win with the ♠A. Now play on the diamonds to promote your third diamond for a heart discard. You eliminate the heart loser by ruffing in the North hand.

Finally, you can approach the clubs. You “know” the ♣A is in East, so lead to the ♣K in South. Come back and finesse the ♣10. West’s only point is the ♣J, so your finesse produces an overtrick.

This is the entire deal:

D 13		N North ♠ Q10964 ♥ A75 ♦ Q3 ♣ Q106	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>1♦</td><td>X</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>2♣</td><td>P</td><td>3♣</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>4♣</td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	1♦	X		P	2♣	P	3♣	P	4♣	P	P	P			
W	N	E	S																				
P	1♦	X																					
P	2♣	P	3♣																				
P	4♣	P	P																				
P																							
W West ♠ 2 ♥ 10963 ♦ 8654 ♣ J875		E East ♠ K75 ♥ QJ8 ♦ A1097 ♣ A92																					
	S South ♠ AJ83 ♥ K42 ♦ KJ2 ♣ K43		4♠ N NS: 0 EW: 0																				

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

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