

♠♥♦♣ **COUNTING WINNERS TOO** ♠♥♦♣

North is the dealer and gives you this hand.

<b>S</b>	South
♠	J742
♥	5
♦	AK63
♣	A1075

She opens 1♣ and East passes. What do you respond?

You have choice. You could support her clubs, bid your diamonds or bid your spades. You are too strong to just bid clubs. You have too much going on in your hand to make this minimum bid, showing 5+ clubs and no other 4 card suit.

So now it's between diamonds and spades. Here's what I do. If I have less than a game forcing hand (<13 points) I skip the diamonds and bid the major. There may be an opportunity later to bid diamonds, but the most important thing is to find a fit in the major suit. In this case, it's spades. If I, instead, respond 1♦ and partner bids 2♣, showing 6 clubs, I would then have to bid 2♠ to suggest that suit. This would be a reverse by the responder. If partner didn't have 4 spades, he would have to rebid 3♣. With this hand, I could survive because I happen to have 4 clubs and 12 points, but if I am weaker and two of my clubs were small hearts, I would be in trouble. I want to get the 4-card major off my chest first. Then partner can accept or reject that suit and we can hunt for a better suit.

Here, partner raises your 1♠ to 2♠, showing support for spades and a minimum hand. You now can give yourself 2 points for the singleton heart and bid the spade game.

You are in 4♠ and West leads the ♥Q. How do you take 10 tricks?

<b>N</b>	North
♠	AKQ5
♥	A62
♦	874
♣	632

West leads ♥Q

<b>S</b>	South
♠	J742
♥	5
♦	AK63
♣	A1075

You have 2 diamond and 3 club losers. If either clubs or diamonds break 3-3, you have an extra trick in that suit. But it is against the odds that either suit will break (31%), much less both of them.

You could plan to ruff the losing cards in the dummy, but that is a very long shot. You have to give up lots of clubs and diamonds to get to the point where you can ruff, and every time you lose a trick, the opponents will lead back a trump. Even if they don't lead trump, you will have to ruff some of your losers with high trump, promoting the opponent's ♠10 and ♠9.

A much simpler approach can be found by counting winners. You have 4 spades, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 1 club. You need two more tricks. These can come from the two small spades in your hand by ruffing dummy's two hearts. Win the heart lead with the ♥A and ruff a heart. Lead a spade back to the dummy and ruff another heart. Lead the ♠J and take your three top diamond and club tricks. You will be left with the ♠KQ to complete the contract.

This is a form of "dummy reversal." When you have an equal number (or more) trump in the dummy, it is often clarifying to count losers in the dummy hand. You have 2 heart losers, 1 diamond and 2 club losers. You eliminated the two heart losers by ruffing in your hand.

Look at the entire deal:

D	8	<b>N</b> North	♠ AKQ5	W	N	E	S
		♥ A62	P	1♣	P	1♠	
		♦ 874	♣ 632	P	2♠	P	4♠
				P	P	P	
<b>W</b>	<b>West</b>	<b>E</b> East					
♠	3	♠	10986				
♥	QJ107	♥	K9843				
♦	J952	♦	Q10				
♣	KQ94	♣	J8				
		<b>S</b> South	♠ J742				
		♥ 5	♦ AK63				
		♣ A1075					
				4♠ S	NS: 0	EW: 0	

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

<https://tinyurl.com/rpd3bpe> , 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.

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