

DANGER LURKS

You are South and you and your partner have an easy auction, arriving at 3NT. The lead is the ♠7. You see this dummy. What is your plan?

	North		
	♠ 93		
	♥ KJ		
	♦ 1097		
	♣ AQJ1098		
West			
♠7			
	South		
	♠ KJ2		
	♥ AQ5		
	♦ AQJ8		
	♣ 764		
West	North	East	South
Pass	3NT	All Pass	1NT

Notice that North ignored his great club suit and jumped right to game in notrump. He had no intention of playing in the 11 trick 5♣ contract when those clubs will take the same number of tricks in 3NT.

The first step in planning the contract is to count sure winners. Given the lead, there is 1 spade, 3 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club. That's a total of 6 tricks. Three more tricks can come from the clubs – even if the finesse loses.

Do you see the problem? If the club finesse loses, it loses to East who will send a spade back through your remaining honor. If West started with 5 spades, that means your contract is set. East is the dangerous hand.

On the other hand, you can get 3 more tricks from diamonds if the ♦K is in East. If the finesse loses, it loses to West who cannot attack spades without giving you a second stopper in the ♠J. West is the safe hand.

If the finesse is on, your work is not done. If East holds the ♦K along with 3 other diamonds and plays low on your both your ♦10 and ♦9, you must repeat the finesse a third time. You will be in your hand with the ♦J and must get back to the dummy. Therefore, you must be careful with your dummy entries.

You win the first spade trick in your hand. Then lead the ♥Q to the ♥K to get to the dummy. Let the ♦10 ride. If it holds, you lead the ♦9 to the ♦J. Then you get back to the dummy by leading up to the ♥J in the dummy for the final finesse.

This is a theme that appears often in the play of the hand. One defender becomes dangerous if he gets the lead and you try to make your decisions that cater to putting the safe hand in the lead rather than that dangerous one.

This is the full deal:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">11</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">D</div>		N North ♠ 93 ♥ KJ ♦ 1097 ♣ AQJ1098	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N</td> <td>E</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>P</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	3NT	P	1NT	P			P
W	N	E	S												
P	3NT	P	1NT												
P			P												
W West ♠ A10874 ♥ 863 ♦ 632 ♣ 52		E East ♠ Q65 ♥ 109742 ♦ K54 ♣ K3													
	S South ♠ KJ2 ♥ AQ5 ♦ AQJ8 ♣ 764		3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0												

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/nwr7cwh> 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.