

DO THE BEST YOU CAN ON DEFENSE

You are sitting in the East, as dealer, with: ♠AQ973 ♥64 ♦K9 ♣AQ104. You open 1♠, but South wins the contract at 4♥. This is the bidding sequence:

West	North	East	South
		1♠	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

Your partner leads the ♠2 and you see this dummy:

North	
♠J85	
♥K52	
♦AQ106	
♣K6	
West	East
♠2	♠AQ973
	♥64
	♦K9
	♣AQ104

You win the opening lead with the ♠A and return the ♠7. The declarer wins this with the ♠K in his hand, your partner playing the ♠6. Declarer now draws trump with the ♥AQ and switches to a low diamond, finessing the ♦Q. You win the ♦K. What is your plan?

When you haven't been supported by your partner, his opening lead in your suit should always show count. From his play of the ♠2 followed by the ♠6 you know he started with an odd number of spades - three spades to be exact. That means the declarer started with two. Your ♠Q is now good but declarer will ruff the spade return. Furthermore, you know by the declarer only drawing two rounds of trump, he started with six hearts. These six, along with the spade he already won and the four diamonds in the dummy, makes a total of 11 tricks. The only logical thing to do is to play the ♣A. This will hold the declarer to 10 tricks and is the best you can do. Others who lead anything else will get a poorer score because the declarer will discard all the clubs in his hand on the four good diamonds in the dummy and score eleven tricks.

Playing in matchpoints, you will often find yourself defending a contract that is cold. But you can get an above average score by holding him to only the tricks he has contracted for and denying him the overtricks that usually gives him a top score.

Here is the whole deal:

14		N North ♠ J85 ♥ K52 ♦ AQJ106 ♣ K6	<table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td>1♠</td><td>2♥</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			1♠	2♥	P	4♥	P	P	P			
W	N	E	S																
		1♠	2♥																
P	4♥	P	P																
P																			
W West ♠ 1062 ♥ 83 ♦ 752 ♣ J9752		E East ♠ AQ973 ♥ 64 ♦ K9 ♣ AQ104																	
	S South ♠ K4 ♥ AQJ1097 ♦ 843 ♣ 83		4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0																

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

<http://tinyurl.com/pwtt3qu> . 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.