

IMAGINE WHAT YOU NEED

You are sitting in the South and the bidding has started by West.

South
 ♠65
 ♥J8
 ♦J943
 ♣KQJ102

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♣	?

Are you going to pass? I hope not. Your partner will be on lead and you desperately want him to lead a club – especially if the contract is no trump. You mustn't pass up the opportunity to double. The double of a artificial bid such as a Stayman bid of 2♣ says, "Partner, if you are on lead please lead a club." This is called a "lead directing" double.

The contract finalizes in 4♠ and your partner obliges and leads the ♣A. The dummy comes down and it's up to you to plan the setting of the contract.

	North ♣A		
West		East	
		♠ A743 ♥ KQ62 ♦ Q7 ♣ 987	
	South		
	♠65 ♥J7 ♦J943 ♣KQJ102		
WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1NT	Pass	2♣	Db1
2♠	Pass	4♠	All pass

You are amazed at your partner's lead, but you must get over it. It's time to plan the defense. You certainly are going to signal that you like the lead and want North to lead another club. Which card do you play to that first trick?

When you have a solid sequence such as you do here, the card to play is the ♣K. This promises the ♣Q. It is the strongest attitude signal you can send.

North wins and leads back the ♣3. Now you are third hand and you play high, but only as high as necessary to win the trick. Therefore, you are going to play the ♣10, the lowest of equals

Your ♣10 wins the second trick and you lead the top of the remaining sequence, the ♣Q. Amazingly, declarer follows to the third club and your partner shows out. Well, it shouldn't have been that amazing since your partner send back the ♣3, the lowest outstanding club. If he had a doubleton, he would have led a higher card.

So, you've taken the first three tricks and you need one more to set the contract. What is your lead to the 4th trick?

A very good practice, as defender, is to count the hands. You know approximately what West's hand is and you see both the dummy and your own hand. Therefore, you can make a good guess about the strength of your partner's hand. Assuming declarer has 15 points, adding dummy's 11 points and your 8 points, you're accounted for 34 points. That means there can only be a maximum of 6 points in the North hand. You're already seen four of them in the initial lead, so your partner can only have a queen and it must be the ♠Q. Also, since the declarer probably has only four spades, your partner must hold three spades. If the holding is ♠Q10x, it won't matter what you lead. He will always have a natural spade trick. But if he holds the ♠Q9x, then the declarer has the ♠KJ10x and partner can be finessed. So assume the worst. Now, since there can be no tricks coming in the side suits, lead another club!

Why give the declarer a ruff and sluff? First of all, he doesn't need to discard any cards; all his side suits cards are winners. Second of all, if he discards from his hand, partner will insert the ♠9 and force declarer to use the ♠A. This will set up his ♠Q for a winner. On the other hand, if declarer trumps high, partner will discards and when he start to pull trump, partner's ♠9 will again force the dummy's ♠A. Again, the ♠Q sets up as a winner. There is nothing declarer can do. You can see how this works when you watch the hand being played on the link provided below.

This is the complete board:

♠ 8	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ Q92 ♥ 9753 ♦ 10862 ♣ A3	1NT P 2♠ P P	P P	2♣ P 4♣ P	X P
W West		E East			
♠ KJ108 ♥ A104 ♦ AK5 ♣ 654		♠ A743 ♥ KQ62 ♦ Q7 ♣ 987			
	S South				
	♠ 65 ♥ J8 ♦ J943 ♣ KQJ102				
		4♠ W		NS: 0 EW: 0	

Often times, you will need to imagine what partner needs to set the contract and will have to play in hopes that your imaginings come true.

If you would like to see the whole hand played out, click on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ovcuzvq>
Or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick.