

LOOK TO MAXIMIZE YOUR TRICKS

East is the dealer and passes. It's your bid:

| | |
|---|-------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | J972 |
| ♥ | QJ104 |
| ♦ | A104 |
| ♣ | AQ |

You have a nice 14 HCP balanced hand so you plan to open 1♦ and rebid 1NT over partner's 1-level response. However your partner, instead, responds 2♣. In standard american bidding, this shows 10+ points, in which case you should invite with 2NT. If you are playing 2 over 1, where a 2-level response promises an opening strength hand, you will rebid 3NT. Either way, you end up in a notrump game.

West leads the ♦6. What is your plan?

| | |
|---|--------|
| N | North |
| ♠ | K103 |
| ♥ | A5 |
| ♦ | Q75 |
| ♣ | KJ1083 |

West leads ♣7

| | |
|---|-------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | J972 |
| ♥ | QJ104 |
| ♦ | A104 |
| ♣ | AQ |

You want to count your top tricks in notrump. If you can see your nine tricks, you can think about overtricks. It is overtricks in matchpoint play, that makes the difference between an average score and a top score.

You have 1 heart, 1 diamond and 5 clubs. You need 2 more tricks for your contract and they can easily come from hearts, once you drive out the ♥K. So how can you make some overtricks? The spades looks like the most promising suit. You are missing the ♠A and ♠Q but you have the ♠KJ10 and you might be able to finesse against those outstanding

honors. The opening lead gives you another possibility. If East puts up the $\heartsuit K$ on this first trick, your $\heartsuit Q$ is an extra trick.

This would be a good hand to experiment with different approaches. Here's how I would play it.

You start by playing low from dummy. East makes a discouraging signal by playing the $\heartsuit 2$ and you win the $\heartsuit 10$. That means West must hold the $\heartsuit K$. While you are in your hand lead the $\spadesuit 2$ up to dummy's $\spadesuit 10$. This wins which means that West also probably holds the $\spadesuit A$ and $\spadesuit Q$. That is great news.

Now play a club to unblock the $\clubsuit AQ$ in your hand so you are able to run all 5 clubs when you're back in the dummy. From your hand lead the $\heartsuit Q$, hoping that if West holds the $\heartsuit K$, he will either put up the $\heartsuit K$, or will duck and allow the $\heartsuit Q$ to win. That's what happens. Now you know that West has all the outstanding honors: The $\spadesuit AQ$, the $\heartsuit K$ and the $\heartsuit K$.

Since you know where the spade honor lie, lead another spade and if West doesn't put up the $\spadesuit A$, win the $\spadesuit K$. West puts up the $\spadesuit Q$ and East follows. Now you can take the 3 remaining clubs, discarding the a diamond and 2 hearts from your hand. Hold on to those two spades in your hand. Since West played the "high" $\spadesuit Q$ on the second spade, it is probably that he started with only 3 spades to the $\spadesuit AQ$. That means that East also started with 3 spades, and you hold the good 13th spade.

When you finish the clubs lead the dummy's last spade. Sure enough both East and West play to the trick and West wins his $\spadesuit A$. Now he is end played. He must lead a red card, leading away from either the $\heartsuit K$ or the $\heartsuit K$. You still have your aces in those two suits and you can get back to your hand to take the last spade and the good $\heartsuit J$. You've only lost 1 trick – the $\spadesuit A$. Most of the other pairs playing this hand will only make 4 or 5 notrumps. Those 30 extra points can be the difference between an average and a top board.

This is the entire deal:

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------|-------------|---|---|---|---------------|---|------------------|---|-----|---|-----|---|--|---|---|
| <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">2</div> | N North \spadesuit K103 \heartsuit A5 \diamondsuit Q75 \clubsuit KJ1083 | <table border="1"> <tr><td>W</td><td>N</td><td>E</td><td>S</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>2\clubsuit</td><td>P</td><td>1\diamondsuit</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td>3NT</td><td>P</td><td>2NT</td></tr> <tr><td>P</td><td></td><td>P</td><td>P</td></tr> </table> | W | N | E | S | P | 2 \clubsuit | P | 1 \diamondsuit | P | 3NT | P | 2NT | P | | P | P |
| | W | N | E | S | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| P | 2 \clubsuit | P | 1 \diamondsuit | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| P | 3NT | P | 2NT | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| P | | P | P | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| W West \spadesuit AQ6 \heartsuit K72 \diamondsuit KJ863 \clubsuit 42 | E East \spadesuit 854 \heartsuit 9863 \diamondsuit 92 \clubsuit 9765 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | S South \spadesuit J972 \heartsuit QJ104 \diamondsuit A104 \clubsuit AQ | <table border="1"> <tr><td>3NT S</td><td>NS: 0 EW: 0</td></tr> </table> | 3NT S | NS: 0 EW: 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3NT S | NS: 0 EW: 0 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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

<http://tinyurl.com/l8zcwz2> , 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. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.

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