

## ♠♥♦♣ LOOKING TOO EASY ♠♥♦♣

Partner is the dealer and there are two passes to you. You are vulnerable, they are not.

| S | South |
|---|-------|
| ♠ | AK653 |
| ♥ | J7    |
| ♦ | 863   |
| ♣ | AK7   |

On first count, you have 15 HCP, and the 5-card suit, which adds to 16 total points. You have a downgrade in the dubious doubleton ♥J7. I'd say the hand is worth 15 points and calls for either a 1♠ or a 1NT opening. Either one is not wrong, and they should end in the same contract. Let's say you open 1♠. West overcalls 2♦ and partner responds 3♦. What does that mean?

A cue bid of the overcaller in the first round is confirming spade support and an invitational hand – a good 10 to 12 points. This amounts to a responder game try. East passes and it's back to you.

Your 15 points and partner's 10-12 equal game – pretty much. You rebid 4♣ which becomes the final contract.

West leads the ♦A and you see this dummy:

| N | North |
|---|-------|
| ♠ | Q942  |
| ♥ | AK54  |
| ♦ | J5    |
| ♣ | 864   |

West leads ♦A

| S | South |
|---|-------|
| ♠ | AK653 |
| ♥ | J7    |
| ♦ | 863   |
| ♣ | AK7   |

You have 1 club and 3 diamond losers. You can ruff the 3<sup>rd</sup> diamond and you should be safe.

Too easy, you say? Right you are.

West's  $\spadesuit A$  lead brings East's  $\spadesuit 10$ . West follows with the  $\spadesuit K$  and East plays the  $\spadesuit 2$ . On trick 3 West leads the  $\spadesuit Q$ . What do you play from the dummy?

You can ruff this. You had planned a ruff from the beginning. But did you notice East's high-low echo on the first two tricks? He has signaled that he started with only 2 diamonds. If you ruff low he will overruff and you still have the club loser. If you ruff high with the  $\heartsuit Q$ , you will lose a trump trick that you hadn't accounted for, if the spades break 3-1. This is a dilemma.

This is the time for the classic "loser on loser play." Don't ruff at all. Discard your losing club from North's hand. Now, if West shifts to a club, you win in your hand and pull trump with the three top spades. They do split 3-1. Now that the trump are all drawn, you can play your second top club and ruff your 3<sup>rd</sup> club with dummy's last spade. Your  $\heartsuit AK$  make up the rest of the needed 10 tricks.

Look at the entire deal:

|  |  |  |  |   |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| D  |  | N North  |  | W N E S   |  |
| 5  |  | $\spadesuit$ Q942<br>$\heartsuit$ AK54<br>$\diamondsuit$ J5<br>$\clubsuit$ 864   |  | P P 1 $\spadesuit$<br>2 $\diamondsuit$ 3 $\diamondsuit$ P 4 $\spadesuit$<br>P P P |  |
| W West   |  | E East   |  |   |  |
| $\spadesuit$ 10<br>$\heartsuit$ Q1093<br>$\diamondsuit$ AKQ974<br>$\clubsuit$ J2 |  | $\spadesuit$ J87<br>$\heartsuit$ 862<br>$\diamondsuit$ 102<br>$\clubsuit$ Q10953 |  |   |  |
|  |  | S South  |  |   |  |
|  |  | $\spadesuit$ AK653<br>$\heartsuit$ J7<br>$\diamondsuit$ 863<br>$\clubsuit$ AK7   |  | 4 $\spadesuit$ S NS: 0 EW: 0  |  |

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

<https://tinyurl.com/rn63tqc> , 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.