

OVERTRICKS IN MATCH POINT PLAY

East deals and passes. You open 1NT and your partner raises you to 3NT. This is a short and simple auction. West leads the ♣6 and this is your dummy:

N	North
♠	A63
♥	J109
♦	QJ1062
♣	Q2

West

♣6

S	South
♠	84
♥	A73
♦	AK984
♣	A84

Notice that North ignored his 5-card diamond suit. It is much preferable to play in 3NT than a game in diamonds. Not only is it 2 tricks harder to make a minor suit game, but the score for doing so is identical to 3NT.

The first thing you should do is count your top tricks. These are the instant winners you can take without giving up the lead. You have 1 spade, 1 heart, 5 diamonds and 1 club trick. You need one more to fulfill your contract. West is leading low from a high honor in clubs. You can hope that it is from the ♣K, so you should put up the ♣Q in the dummy. You have nothing to lose. If East holds the ♣K, dummy's ♣Q will be worthless anyway.

In fact, the ♣Q holds the trick and now you have all your 9 needed tricks for the contract. If you are playing social rubber bridge or even team bridge which is scored in IMPs, you can just take your tricks and move on to the next deal. But if you are playing for matchpoints,

where every extra trick takes on gigantic significance, you should be thinking about how you can take an extra trick or two.

Look at the heart suit. You are missing two honors, the ♥KQ. The probability that they will either be split between East and West or that they will both be in East is about 75%. That means there is a good chance that you can finesse against one of those missing honors. But you don't want to endanger your contract needlessly. You first take all your diamond tricks. Perhaps the opponents will make a fortunate or telling discard. Make sure you take the final diamond in the dummy so you can next lead the top heart - ♥J. West will probably win and lead another club. You take the ♣A and go back to the dummy using the ♠A. Now lead the ♥10. You are hoping that East will cover this honor. If he does, you win the ♥A and your last heart will win the overtrick. If East plays low, however, you have to make the decision whether to risk the contract for the overtrick. If West started with both heart honors (25%), you will go down. If the honors were split (75%), you get the overtrick. Bridge is a game of decisions 😊.

This is the entire deal:

6	N North ♠ A63 ♥ J109 ♦ QJ1062 ♣ Q2	W N E S P 3NT P 1NT P P P
	W West ♠ Q1075 ♥ K85 ♦ KJ9653 ♣ KJ9653	E East ♠ KJ92 ♥ Q642 ♦ 753 ♣ 107
	S South ♠ 84 ♥ A73 ♦ AK984 ♣ A84	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/huhhqry>, 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.