

♠♥♦♣ PLANNING BEFORE TRICK 1 ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer. What are your thoughts about this hand?:

S	South
♠	KQ9
♥	7
♦	Q532
♣	AK1076

This is an minimum, unbalanced hand. It is nothing special, but certainly worth a 1♣ opening bid. West overcalls 1♠ and partner responds 2♥. Because of the overcall, partner is promising at least 5 hearts; otherwise he would have made a negative double to show only 4 hearts.

East passes and it's back to you. This is an awkward position. A rebid of 3♣ promises 6 clubs and could put you too high. You can't rebid 2♦ because that is a reverse and would show at least 16 points. Although 2NT would indicate two hearts, it is the least bad of the bad options available. Your partner raises you to 3NT.

West leads the ♠7 to his partner's ♠J. Plan the play.

N	North
♠	53
♥	AJ863
♦	AK4
♣	984

West leads ♠7

S	South
♠	KQ9
♥	7
♦	Q532
♣	AK1076

Before you decide whether to win the first trick or duck, you must plan out the entire play. Don't make the mistake of starting your plan part way through playing the hand. Your earlier choices may have been wrong and there is usually no way to correct them.

You have 7 top tricks, including the spade you can win now or later through promotion. You need two more tricks, and it is the club suit that looks like it can give them to you. You plan to finesse the ♠10 against the ♠Q and ♠J. You will take the two finesses into the West hand, and you don't care if West wins one of the finesses because he can't effectively use his spades against your ♠Q stopper. So you can win the first trick with the ♠K, but you cannot play the ♠A before you take the first finesse. You need the outstanding honors to either be split or both in East. And if they are both in East, you need the ♣A and ♣K to win East's honors, whenever he plays them.

Go to the dummy with a diamond and play the ♣9. If that holds lead the ♣8 next. East must play his honors sometime, and your carefully preserved AK will capture them. You can take 1 spade, 1 heart 3 diamonds and 5 clubs, for 10 tricks total. On this deal, you can make 11 tricks by ending playing West. See if you can figure out how that can be done.

Look at the entire deal:

11 D	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ 53 ♥ AJ863 ♦ AK4 ♣ 984	1♠	2♥	P	2NT
W West		P	3NT	P	P
♠ A10874 ♥ K105 ♦ J1086 ♣ 3		E East			
	S South	3NT S			NS: 0 EW: 0
	♠ KQ9 ♥ 7 ♦ Q532 ♣ AK1076				

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y59yw9l4>, 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.