

PLAY FROM THE CORRECT HAND

Everyone is vulnerable and East deals. You pass, as does West. Your partner opens 1♣ and its back to you. What do you respond?

S	South
♠	AQ974
♥	QJ1063
♦	105
♣	3

You have 9 HCP and 10 cards in the majors. You would like to play in a major but first you must find a fit with partner. You should respond 1♠ - the higher ranking of two 5-card suits. North will rebid 1NT, denying a 4-card spade suit. There is a convention to uncover a 5-3 fit. This convention is called “new minor forcing.” A rebid of the other minor suit asks partner to describe his hand further; either a 3-card spade suit or a 4-card heart suit. You need at least an invitational strength hand. You have 9 HCP but you can add a couple of points for the two 5-card suits. If partner has neither 3 spades nor 4 hearts, he rebids one of the minors or notrump. In this case, he rebids 3♣.

Partner denial of 3 spades doesn't deny 3 hearts. It only denied 4 hearts. You can make a forcing rebid of 3♥ now to show your second 5-card major. Partner will take preference to spades with a rebid of 3♠. This promises 2 spades but he probably has an honor in the suit. He also prefers playing in spades to notrump or hearts. You should raise to 4♠ based on your shapely hand.

This was the bidding:

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♣	Pass	Pass
Pass	1NT	Pass	1♠
Pass	3♣	Pass	2♦
Pass	3♠	Pass	3♥
All Pass		Pass	4♠

West leads the ♦2 and the dummy comes down:

N	North
♠	K8
♥	72
♦	AKQ8
♣	J9752

♦2

S	South
♠	AQ974
♥	QJ1063
♦	105
♣	3

The lead of the ♦2 indicates a lead from a 4-card suit. As you will see, this wasn't the best lead. But when the defenders make a mistake we declarer should be ready to pounce on it! West could be leading from the ♦J; in which case you should play low and win with your ♦10. But look what happens if he is leading from 3 little diamonds. East will win the ♦J and lead a club. You will suffer 1 loser in each minor suit plus the unavoidable ♥AK losers. Sad!!

You should, rather, win the trick with the ♦Q and take the ♦AK, discarding the losing ♣3. Now, assuming that the trump suit will behave and break no worse than 4-2, you can pull three rounds of trump. But you will still need 3 heart tricks to go along with the 4 spades and 3 diamonds. Your best chance, as always, is to lead up to the honors. That means that if the heart honors are in East, he will have to use them in front of your honors, conserving the ♥QJ10. A fortunate 3-3 trump break means you can actually make 5♠: 5 spades, 3 hearts and 3 diamonds.

This is the entire deal:

10 ^D	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ K8 ♥ 72 ♦ AKQ8 ♣ J9752	P 1♠ P 1♠ P 1NT P 2♦ P 3♣ P 3♥ P 3♠ P 4♠			
W West		E East			
♠ J52 ♥ 985 ♦ J632 ♣ AQ4		♠ 1063 ♥ AK4 ♦ 974 ♣ K1086			
	S South				
	♠ AQ974 ♥ QJ1063 ♦ 105 ♣ 3				
			4♠ S	NS: 0 EW: 0	

Note that with a club lead, the contract can be beaten. The defenders win the first club and they will keep leading clubs each time they get the lead in the heart suit. This requires declarer to use up his trump to the point he can't pull all the outstanding trump. He loses 1 spade, 2 hearts and 2 clubs. Also note, that if North ends in 3NT, he will certainly receive a club lead and the defenders will take the top 3 clubs and 2 hearts to defeat the contract. Finally, a North contract of 4♥ cannot be beaten, no matter what the lead.

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

<http://tinyurl.com/hf5ktd> , 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.