

♠♥♦♣ PLAY THE PERCENTAGES ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer. Your hand:

S	undefined
♠	3
♥	AKQ4
♦	AQ
♣	AKQJ106

You have 25 HCP and a quality 6-card club suit. This is an automatic 2♣ opening. Partner gives you a positive response of 2♠, indicating he has 8 or more points and a good spade suit of 5 cards or more. You show him where you live, ♣3. He rebids his spades, promising 6. You want to find out how good his spades really are. You make a RKC Blackwood call of 4NT and he show two key cards without the ♠Q. Since you have 3 key cards yourself, partner must have both the ♠A and ♠K. He is assuming his last bid suit will be trump and therefore, includes the ♠K in his answer.

You have no intention to play in spades. Your sights are on a notrump contract and since taking all 13 tricks is only dependant of the diamond finesse, you rebid 7NT.

West leads the ♠Q. What is your plan?

N	undefined
♠	AK7652
♥	653
♦	87
♣	85

West leads ♠Q

S	undefined
♠	3
♥	AKQ4
♦	AQ
♣	AKQJ106

You would have appreciated a lead of a different suit. The spade lead forces you to make irrevocable decisions at trick 2. You win the ♠A and since you will never get back to the dummy, you must lead the ♠K to the second trick. Worse, you will have to decide what to discard from your hand. Will it be the ♦Q, where you will play for the 3-3 heart split; or the ♥4, pushing you to the diamond finesse. You have to make your decision right now, because if it leads to taking the diamond finesse, you must take it right now at trick 3. What would you do?

If you read the title of this article, you may have guessed. You compare the probability of the two lines of play. Since you don't know anything about the opponents distribution, the diamond finesse is 50%. The probability of 6 outstanding hearts breaking evenly is 35%. Both of these chances are a priori. That is, without any foreknowledge of how the cards lie. All you can do is play the percentages. Take the more probable finesse and discard the ♥4. In fact, you make your 7NT contract.

This is the full deal:

3 ♠	N undefined	W	N	E	S
	♠ AK7652 ♥ 653 ♦ 87 ♣ 85	P	2♣	P	3♣
W undefined		P	3♠	P	4NT
♠ QJ109 ♥ 97 ♦ 1096532 ♣ 2		P	5♥	P	7NT
		P	P	P	
	E undefined				
	♠ 84 ♥ J1082 ♦ KJ4 ♣ 9743				
	S undefined				
	♠ 3 ♥ AKQ4 ♦ AQ ♣ AKQJ106				
		7NT S		NS: 0 EW: 0	

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

<https://tinyurl.com/y66vd4ue>, 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.