

PLAYING FOR POTENTIAL WINNERS

North and East both pass and it's up to you with this hand:

S	South
♠	Q84
♥	AK73
♦	AQ52
♣	K6

With 18 HCP you are too strong for 1NT and too weak for 2NT. You should open 1♦ and after partner's 1-level response, jump to 2NT. This shows a balanced 18-19 points. But over your 1♦ opening partner denies a 4-card major and responds 1NT. Some partnerships agree that a raise from 1NT to 2NT shows 18-19 points, but I like to show this strength by jumping to 3NT. Rebidding 2NT looks too invitational and partner might forget it is showing a strong hand, and pass.

East leads the ♥4 and you put your hand down as the dummy. Take over for North and plan your way to this 3NT contract.

N	North
♠	1063
♥	62
♦	1098
♣	AQ1097

♥4

S	South
♠	Q84
♥	AK73
♦	AQ52
♣	K6

In a notrump contract, you want to count your top tricks: those tricks you can take without giving up the lead. You count 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 3 clubs. That is 6 in total and you must look for 3 more. You have two finesses available. You can finesse the ♦Q to take

one extra diamond trick if it is successful. You can also finesse the ♣10 to get two extra club tricks.

You must decide what to do with the first heart lead. Holding 6 hearts between you and the dummy, you might use the Rule of 7 which indicates a holdup on the first lead. (7-6=1). This would be wrong, though. You can't risk West winning and switching to spades. You are not sure if you have any stoppers in the spade suit. Therefore, win the first heart and go right after the extra tricks.

It would be nice to play the ♣A and ♣K before finessing the ♣10, but you have only two clubs in the dummy. You are going to have to play the ♣K and lead to the ♣10 in your hand. The ♣10 wins and both defenders follow suit. Now you can take all 5 clubs and lead a diamond to the ♦Q in dummy. This wins and assures 9 tricks. You will find that the spade suit provides 1 trick due to the presence of the ♠10 along with the ♠Q. You have taken 10 tricks in total.

This is the entire deal:

D 9	N North	W N E S
	♠ 1063 ♥ 62 ♦ 1098 ♣ AQ1097	P P P 1♦ P 1NT P 3NT P P P
W West	E East	
♠ K95 ♥ J105 ♦ J64 ♣ J854	♠ AJ72 ♥ Q984 ♦ K73 ♣ 32	
	S South	
	♠ Q84 ♥ AK73 ♦ AQ52 ♣ K6	3NT N NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/ztyz7a4> , 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.