

READING THE BIDDING

You and your partner are vulnerable on this board. East deals and passes. .

S	South
♠	AJ75
♥	KJ92
♦	Q5
♣	J103

This hand could be passed. There are only 12 HCP and the ♦Q doubleton may not contribute the 2/3 of a trick that the value we give queens indicate. However, the fact that we have two 4-card majors increases the probability that we can find a fit with partner at a low level. Also, it is always a good idea to make the first bid in an auction. I would open this hand 1♣

After West's pass, North responds with 1♦. East comes back in with a 1♠ overcall. I think you should rebid 1NT, showing a minimum hand and a spade stopper. If you do, partner will raise you to 3NT.

Rather than leading spade, West leads the ♥3.

N	North
♠	Q103
♥	A106
♦	A10873
♣	92

West leads ♥3

S	South
♠	AJ75
♥	KJ92
♦	Q5
♣	J103

It is not surprising that that West didn't lead a spade. Your side hold 7 spades and East overcalled, showing either 5 or 6 spades. West's must hold 4

hearts, since the ♥3 is the 4th heart down and you hold the ♥2. You are happy with the heart lead. You place the ♥Q in West and finesse your ♥9. Now you can lead a low heart back to the dummy, finessing the ♥10. You are also positive that the ♠K lies in East's hand and you will be able to execute a repeated finesse against that king.

So before playing to the first trick, you can read from the bidding that you have 9 top tricks; 4 spades, 4 hearts and the ♦A. You can take them and give the rest to the opponents, but if you were playing in a matchpoint game, where overtricks are essential, you will want to take risk for a 10th trick.

This is the order of play you should adopt. You win the first heart lead with you ♥9 and lead the ♥2 up to dummy's ♥10. Now lead the ♦2 back to your hand, finessing the ♦Q. If East holds the ♦K he will be reluctant to play 2nd hand high so early in the play. You risk him taking the ♦K and leading his clubs. This would set the contract, but it is worth the risk for a top board. If West wins the ♦K, he will probably lead a spade to his partner's suit and hope he can develop that suit.

Your ♦Q holds and with that extra trick, play the rest of the hand conservatively. Go to dummy's ♥A and run the ♠Q and ♠10. Then lead the ♠3 back to your hand to take the ♠A and the dummy's ♦A. You can now give up the last 3 tricks.

This hand was played recently on the internet hundreds of times. It was passed out by 40% of the North/South pairs. The +630 score was achieved less than 5% of the time. The key to the play, though, is the logic suggested by the bidding and the play by the defenders.

This is the entire deal:

<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; margin-right: 5px;">2</div> <div style="font-size: 2em; margin-left: 5px;">♠</div> </div>		N North ♠ Q103 ♥ A106 ♦ A10873 ♣ 92	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N</td> <td>E</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>1♦</td> <td>1♠</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	1♦	1♠	1NT	P	3NT	P	P	P			
W	N	E	S																
P	1♦	1♠	1NT																
P	3NT	P	P																
P																			
W West ♠ 2 ♥ Q543 ♦ J96 ♣ KQ654		E East ♠ K9864 ♥ 87 ♦ K42 ♣ A87																	
	S South ♠ AJ75 ♥ KJ92 ♦ Q5 ♣ J103		3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0																

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/mrrsr6m> , 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.

© David Germaine 2017