

♠♥♦♣ THINKING AHEAD ♠♥♦♣

East deals and passes. You have a flat 10 points and also pass. This is your hand:

S	South
♠	AK3
♥	8762
♦	8654
♣	K10

West opens 2♠ and your partner overcalls 3♣. East raises his partner to 3♠, and it's back to you.

North's overcall of a weak-two opening is strong. You can't preempt a preempt. Therefore, is shows at least 14 points. You have a good hand for notrump. You have a double stopper in their suit; a high honor in partner's long suit, and even though you don't hold any red suit stoppers, you have 4 cards in each suit and your partner has shown points in those suits. You bid 3NT, buying the contract.

West leads the ♠7 and you see this dummy:

N	North
♠	5
♥	AJ4
♦	A93
♣	A87643

West's Lead: ♠7

S	South
♠	AK3
♥	8762
♦	8654
♣	K10

You first count your top tricks: 2 spades, 1 heart, 1 diamond and 2 clubs. You need 3 more, which you plan to get from your partner's club suit.

You play the ♠5 from dummy; East plays the ♠4 and you win the ♠A.

You are missing 5 clubs, including the ♣Q and ♣J. If they break in the expected 3-2, you will only lose 1 club. That gives you the 3 extra tricks you need for your contract.

You play the ♣K and lead the ♣10 to dummy's ♣A. Both opponents follow to the first 2 club tricks. You play another club and West wins with the ♣J.

You are about to claim the rest of the nine tricks when West does the unexpected. West read partner's ♠4 on his initial lead and knew you held the ♠K. He could see all nine tricks – 7 in the dummy and your ♠AK. He cleverly shifted to the ♥10.

You can win the ♥A, but there is no way you can get back to your hand to cash the ♠K. Try as you might, you only have 8 tricks.

I was probably at fault, leading you to think this was a easy contract. It's not. Whenever you think a contract is easy, stop and play the whole deal out in your head. It's usually blockage that will trip you up.

If you had given the play sufficient thought, you would have anticipated the entry problem at trick 1.

The way to avoid this problem is to lead the ♣10, rather the ♣K. If West covers with the ♣J, you let him win. If West plays low, East will win the first trick. Now, whomever wins that trick and switch to hearts, but you can unravel your 9 winners. You win the ♥A and follow with a low club to your ♣K. You cash the ♠K and lead a diamond back to the dummy's ♦A and the rest of the clubs.

This is the entire deal:

		N North ♠ 5 ♥ AJ4 ♦ A93 ♣ A87643	W N E S 2♣ 3♣ 3♣ 3NT P P P
		W West ♠ QJ8762 ♥ 103 ♦ Q2 ♣ J95	E East ♠ 1094 ♥ KQ95 ♦ KJ107 ♣ Q2
		S South ♠ AK3 ♥ 8762 ♦ 8654 ♣ K10	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yjtrlo3n>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. If you don't want to see the opponents hands, click on the white area in the South hand before you start.

Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.