

♠♥♦♣ **THREE CHANCES OF SUCCESS** ♠♥♦♣

East is the dealer and passes. You hold:

S	South
♠	K6
♥	AJ7
♦	KJ86
♣	KQ64

You have a balanced 17 HCP. Yes, you have a dubious doubleton spade, but that's what partner's are for. You open 1NT.

Your partner raises you to 3NT and of course, you get a low spade lead. East puts up the ♠J and you must take your ♠K. Now what?

N	North
♠	983
♥	K95
♦	A754
♣	A85

West leads ♠7

S	South
♠	K6
♥	AJ7
♦	KJ86
♣	KQ64

In addition to the spade you just won, you have 2 hearts, 2 diamonds and 3 club tricks in the bag; 8 in all. Where are you going to get the 9<sup>th</sup> trick?

Amazingly, you have 3 possibilities: the heart finesse, the diamond finesse and the possibility that clubs will break 3-3. This is unusual position. You don't know anything about the opponents' distribution, so each of the finesses is 50% and the fortunate club break is a 36% probability. But if you guess wrong on any one of the approaches, the opponents will diluge you with their spades.

The real problem here is deciding in what order you are going to play the cards. It is clear that you should test the clubs first. If they do break evenly, you will have your 9<sup>th</sup>

trick and you don't care if the finesses win or lose. The probability is low but it doesn't cost you anything to try.

West shows out on the 3<sup>rd</sup> club. What's next?

Notice that you have 8 diamonds. If they split in the normal manner, 3-2 (67%), there is a slightly less than 50% chance that the  $\heartsuit$  Q is in the shorter diamond hand, and your  $\heartsuit$  J will serve as the winning trick. So you don't take the finesse, but rather, plunk down the  $\heartsuit$  K, then the  $\heartsuit$  A, and keep an eye out for the  $\heartsuit$  Q.

Here, it doesn't fall. But you are still in the lead and you can take your last chance - finessing in hearts. Lay down the  $\heartsuit$  K first (the  $\heartsuit$  Q might be singleton 😊) and lead to the  $\heartsuit$  J.

Finally, one of the three lines of play works. By combining the three approaches, you've maximized the probability of making your contract.

This is the full deal:

Board 14					
N North					
♠ 983					
♥ K95					
♦ A754					
♣ A85					
W West		W	N	E	S
♠ AQ10754				Pass	1NT
♥ 86				Pass	3NT
♦ Q109				Pass	Pass
♣ 72				Pass	Pass
E East					
♠ J2					
♥ Q10432					
♦ 32					
♣ J1093					
S South					
♠ K6					
♥ AJ7					
♦ KJ86					
♣ KQ64					
		3NT South			
		0		0	

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

<https://tinyurl.com/y3uvrbdh>, 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.