

♠♥♦♣ USING THE OPENING LEAD ♠♥♦♣

East dealt and passed. You're up with:

S	South
♠	Q108
♥	KJ10743
♦	64
♣	AJ

This isn't a great hand. Yes, it has a 6-card quality suit, but it the most balanced hand you can have with a 6-card suit. Yet, it is certainly worth a 1♥ opening.

Partner responds 3♦. This is a conventional bid, showing 4-card support for hearts and an invitational hand of a good 9 to a bad 12 points. The convention is call Bergen Raise. It was invented by Marty Bergen early in his career. It is a very handy convention because it simultaneously pinpoints the values in partner's hand and at the same time acts as a preemptory bid against the opponents entering the auction. Since it promises a 9-card trump fit, the 3-level is safe in accordance with The Law of Total Tricks.

You hope for the best and raise to 4♥. West lead the ♦K and you see this dummy.

N	North
♠	KJ5
♥	Q865
♦	AJ7
♣	1063

West lead ♦K

S	South
♠	Q108
♥	KJ10743
♦	64
♣	AJ

You have 4 losers, one in each suit. What is your plan?

You can't do anything about the two missing major suit aces. The lead of diamond king sets up the diamond suit for a loser, so you will have to concentrate on discarding your club some way.

Often times, the opponents will help coming up with the solution. Either from their bidding or early play, they can unwittingly suggest a line. This time you only have West's opening lead of the  $\heartsuit K$  to guide you. If it is a normal lead, it will be backed up by the  $\heartsuit Q$ . That means you can finesse your  $\heartsuit J$  and if the  $\heartsuit Q$  is really in West, you will have an extra diamond on which to discard the  $\clubsuit J$ .

I hope you are doing all this planning before you play from the dummy. If you already played the  $\heartsuit A$ , you are too late to make this play and save the contract. In order to get to your hand to finesse the  $\heartsuit J$ , you have to either use your  $\clubsuit A$  or lead a trump or spade, allowing the defenders to gain the lead. They will switch to clubs and now, when West takes his  $\heartsuit Q$ , he will lead a club and you will still have your 4 losers.

You must duck the initial lead! West will win the first trick and will switch, not wanting to set up your  $\heartsuit J$ . He will probably switch to a club, which you will win with your  $\clubsuit A$ . Now you lead a diamond up to your  $\heartsuit AJ$ . Whether or not West plays his  $\heartsuit Q$ , you will have an immediate club discard on the remaining diamond honor in the dummy.

This is the full deal:

14	<b>N North</b>	W	N	E	S
	$\spadesuit$ KJ5 $\heartsuit$ Q865 $\diamonds$ AJ7 $\clubsuit$ 1063	P	3 $\diamonds$	P	P
<b>W West</b>		<b>E East</b>			
$\spadesuit$ A742 $\heartsuit$ 92 $\diamonds$ KQ109 $\clubsuit$ 942		$\spadesuit$ 963 $\heartsuit$ A $\diamonds$ 8532 $\clubsuit$ KQ875			
	<b>S South</b>				
	$\spadesuit$ Q108 $\heartsuit$ KJ10743 $\diamonds$ 64 $\clubsuit$ AJ	4 $\heartsuit$ S NS: 0 EW: 0			

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

<https://tinyurl.com/y9o45kq8> , 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.