

WATCH OUT FOR THE DISTRIBUTION

You are the dealer and you pick up this very unbalanced hand:

S	South
♠	73
♥	AQ109865
♦	64
♣	Q4

With 8 HCP and a good 7-card heart suit, you want to make a pre-emptive 3♥ opening bid. The bid is passed out and you become the declarer. West leads the ♠8 and you partner tables this hand:

N	North
♠	QJ964
♥	
♦	AKQ107
♣	J85

West leads ♠8

S	South
♠	73
♥	AQ109865
♦	64
♣	Q4

You are disappointed when you see his heart void, but are encouraged by his three top diamonds. You think you can take 6 tricks in hearts if they break correctly, and there is a possibility of a spade trick if they continue spades.

However, there is a red flag in this hand. Both you and your partner have an unbalanced hand. What are the chances that the opponents have balanced hands? Very small. You must be careful about their getting ruffs on your winners.

East wins the initial spade lead with the ♠K and switches to the ♣K, which holds – West playing an encouraging ♣10. Then East returns to the spade suit

and leads the ♠A. This time West shows out and East leads the ♠2 for the 3rd trick. What do you do?

You know that West will ruff and lead back a club to the obvious void in East's hand. That will give East the chance for another spade lead for another ruff. You must stop this. Yes you can ruff, but West will overruff you. You must ruff, but must ruff high. You could go up with the ♥A, or you could take the chance that the ♥K is in East and rise with the ♥Q.

Say you play the ♥Q, West discarding. Now you play the ♥A and West's ♥J falls under it. This is good news and bad news. You smothered the ♥J and saved a trick – but the hearts have broken 5-1.

East doesn't take his ♥K, so you should switch to a diamond and take the good ♠Q in the dummy on which you can discard the losing ♣Q.

At this point the defenders have taken 2 spades and a club. You'll have to give East the ♥K and when he puts you back in your hand, you have to play the hearts and give up another heart. You are down 1 for -50.

However, had you trumped low or not trumped at all, you would have been down another trick. This is only a 50 points difference, but in a match pointed game, can mean the difference between a top and a bottom board.

This is the entire deal:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; width: 40px; text-align: center; margin: 0 auto;"> 11 D </div>	N North ♠ QJ964 ♥ ♦ AKQ107 ♣ J85	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>3♥</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	P	P	3♥
	W	N	E	S						
P	P	P	3♥							
W West ♠ 8 ♥ J ♦ J932 ♣ A1097632	E East ♠ AK1052 ♥ K7432 ♦ 85 ♣ K									
	S South ♠ 73 ♥ AQ109865 ♦ 64 ♣ Q4	3♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0								

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

<http://tinyurl.com/ycc6sy7d> , 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.