

A CAREFULLY PLAYED PART SCORE

You are the dealer. What would you do with this hand?

South
 ♠ AJ872
 ♥ KJ2
 ♦ A4
 ♣ 432

This is a nice 14 point hand. It's very easy to open 1♠. Your LHO passes and partner raises to 2♠. This shows at least 3 spades and a constructive raise; between 8 and 10 points. Now what do you do?

After partner supports your spades, you can use the Losing Trick Count (LTC) to determine if you should go further. Every one of the top three cards in each suit that you don't have, you count as a loser. You have 2 losers in spades (the ♠K and ♠Q), 2 in hearts (the ♥A and ♥Q), 1 in diamonds (the ♦K) and 3 in clubs (the ♣A, ♣K and ♣Q.) That totals 8 losers. An average opening hand has only 7 losers. So, you are below average. A hand that invites game after a single raise has 6 or fewer losers. So this hand should definitely pass.

Now your LHO comes alive with a bid of 2NT. This is a conventional bid. It can't be that his hand is suddenly good enough to take 8 tricks in notrump. It is called the Unusual Notrump. It says he has a shapely hand with at least 5 cards in each of the minor suits. He is asking his partner to take him out in his longest minor. West must have a weak hand because he could have made a bid on the first round, but he was silent. If North passes, East must take him out. It's like a takeout double only it is for two, rather than three suits. East doesn't have to worry because North competes with 3♠. This is passed out. West leads the ♣A.

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♠	Pass	Pass
2NT	3♠	All Pass	

After the lead of the ♣A, you see this dummy:

	North
	♠ K64
	♥ 106543
	♦ KQ
	♣ Q106
West	
♣A	
	South
	♠ AJ872
	♥ KJ2
	♦ A4
	♣ 432

Notice that North has a very good hand for a single raise. He has four “cover cards.” Cover cards are aces, kings and queens that eliminate losers in partner’s hand. Remember that you had 8 losers. His 2 kings and 2 queens bring your losers down to four. Theoretically, that is sufficient to make 3 ♠.

West takes his ♣AK and leads a third club, hoping that his partner can ruff. Fortunately, the suit splits evenly and your dummy’s ♣Q wins the trick. Now it’s time to attack trump. You have no other use for them, so you can afford to “pull trump first.” You should play the ♠K from dummy and then finesse the ♠J. Here it wins and you clear the spade suit.

Next, you try to win a heart trick. You already have 8 tricks locked up; 5 spades, 2 diamonds and the ♣Q. You only need one heart and you only have one trip to the dummy to lead hearts to your hand. Go to the dummy with a diamond and lead toward your ♥K. You are fortunate that the ♥A is in East and you make your contract. Finesses do win 50% of the time!

Here is the entire hand:

11 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ K64 ♥ 106543 ♦ KQ ♣ Q106	P 2♠ P P 2NT 3♠ P P P
W West	E East	
♠ 95 ♥ Q8 ♦ 109532 ♣ AKJ9	♠ Q103 ♥ A97 ♦ J876 ♣ 875	
	S South	
	♠ AJ872 ♥ KJ2 ♦ A4 ♣ 432	3♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/okxhg2a>, 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.