

♠♥♦♣ A MATTER OF TIMING ♠♥♦♣

East is the dealer and passed. You opened 1♦ with this unbalanced hand:

S	undefined
♠	652
♥	4
♦	AKJ1098
♣	K63

Your partner responds 1♥ and you rebid 2♦. Now he jumps to 4♦. What do you do?

Partner's jump past 3NT indicates he too, probably holds an unbalanced hand. He has good Diamond support and is inviting you to a minor suit game. He must have extra points because you only promised a minimum hand of 13-15 total points. Although you normally need a note from your doctor to bid a minor suit game, you go for 5♦.

West leads the ♣J and this dummy comes down:

N	undefined
♠	AQ9
♥	KQ85
♦	Q742
♣	54

West's Lead: ♣J

S	undefined
♠	652
♥	4
♦	AKJ1098
♣	K63

This looks tough. For losers you see 2 Spades, 1 Heart, and given the lead, 2 Club losers – 3 too many. You can ruff 1 Club in the dummy. But its the position of the two missing major suit honors - ♠K and ♥A – that should concern you.

East wins the first trick with the ♣A and returns the ♣2. You win the ♣K and test your luck with the Hearts. You lead the ♥4 to the dummy. If West comes up with the ♥A you have two discards on the ♥K and ♥Q; and your problems are over. But West plays low and your ♥Q wins the trick. That was too bad.

Now your contract depends on the Spade finesse. You can increase the 50% *a priori* probability to 100% if you can endplay East. This will require stripping your hands of Hearts and Clubs. It is a matter of good timing.

After winning the ♥Q you ruff a Heart. You plan to ruff all the remaining Hearts, so you will need 2 more entries to the dummy. One will be the ♦Q and the other will be a ruff of your remaining Club.

You pull the trump in two rounds, ending in the dummy with the ♦Q. You ruff the third Heart and ruff your Club to get back to the board. Now you can ruff your last Heart and you are back in your hand. The stage is set. You throw East into the lead by leading a low Spade to dummy's ♠9 (assuming West plays low). East has no play. He can either lead a spade to your ♠AQ tenace; or a club, giving you a Spade discard from your hand and a ruff in the dummy.

Of course, if West plays the J♠, rather than a low Spade, you cover with the ♠Q and East is forced to win his ♠K. He is in the same predicament.

There was a little luck involved, but timing was more important. If you took the club ruff before you started on the Hearts, you wouldn't have had enough dummy entries to strip all the Hearts.

Also, notice that 3NT is an easier make, since the the opponents can take only 3 Clubs and the ♥A.

This is the entire deal:

14 [♠]	N undefined	W	N	E	S
	♠ AQ9 ♥ KQ85 ♦ Q742 ♣ 54	P		P	1♦
W undefined		P	1♥	P	2♦
♠ J743 ♥ A962 ♦ 6 ♣ J1098		P	4♦	P	5♦
		P	P	P	
	E undefined				
	♠ K108 ♥ J1073 ♦ 53 ♣ AQ72				
	S undefined				
	♠ 652 ♥ 4 ♦ AKJ1098 ♣ K63				
		5♦ S	NS: 0	EW: 0	

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