

AN UNUSUAL OVERCALL

This is the hand you were dealt.

S	South
♠	
♥	J105
♦	A7653
♣	A8743

West was the dealer and opens 1♠. Partner passes and East raises to 2♠. It's back to you. You have 9 HCP but are lucky to have a 5-5-3-0 distribution. The opponents are probably going to settle in a comfortable 2♠ contract. You always should strive to interfere with these constructive auctions. Assuming West has a minimum hand, he will be glad to have to take only 8 tricks. At least get them up to the 3-level. You could overcall with 3♣ or 3♦. But it's possible that your partner is short in the minor suit you pick and long in the other minor. There is a convention that allows him to pick his longest minor as the trump suit. It's called the Unusual Notrump convention. Overcalling 2NT when the opponents are showing 8 spades would be very unusual. Therefore, the 2NT bid takes on a conventional meaning of 5-5 in the two lowest unbid suits – clubs and diamonds. It asks partner to pick the suit that would make a better trump suit. If the opponents bar you from the contract, at least you have gotten them to a more uncomfortable 3-level.

The bidding progresses:

West	North	East	South
1♠	Pass	2♠	2NT
Pass	4♣	Dbl	All Pass

North's jump to 4♣ doesn't show strength. After all, he passed originally. It is pre-emptive, showing 4 or more clubs. He is making it harder on the opponents. East's double might be for penalty. But it could also mean he wants his partner to bid on with a suitable hand.

4♣x is passed out and East leads his partner's suit. Since he has supported spades and thus his partner knows how many he has, he leads his highest spade. In this one lead, he has conveyed two bits of information.

Take over the North hand and plan the play:

N	North
♠	AQ1065
♥	Q
♦	QJ9
♣	10652

East leads ♠8

S	South
♠	
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When the dummy has more trump than the declarer, it is often easier to count losers from the dummy's hand. This is called "dummy reversal." South has 3 heart losers, 1 diamond and maybe 2 club losers. The diamond finesse might save a diamond loser. You can eliminate two heart losers by trumping in your hand. If trumps split 2-2 you can eliminate a club loser by playing the ♣A and another club. The lead of a low spade gives you the opportunity to eliminate one of the hearts and when you win the spade in your hand.

West plays a low spade and you win the first spade with the ♠10. Since you are in your hand it is best to try the diamond finesse, leading the ♦Q. East plays low and the queen holds. You follow with the ♦J which also holds. Go no further in diamonds. Take the ♠A and lead a trump to the ♣A, followed by the ♣3. As hoped for, the ♣K and ♣Q crash onto each other. The rest is easy. You have eliminated 4 of the 6 losers and you make an overtrick for a score of +610.

This is the entire deal:

D 16	N North	W N E S
	♠ AQ1065	1♠ P 2♠ 2NT
	♥ Q	P 4♣ X P
	♦ QJ9	P P
	♣ 10652	
W West	E East	
♠ KJ942	♠ 873	
♥ A642	♥ K9873	
♦ 102	♦ K84	
♣ K9	♣ QJ	
	S South	
	♠	
	♥ J105	
	♦ A7653	
	♣ A8743	
		4♠x N NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y98bkhbr> , 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.

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