

DISCOVERING THE SOLUTION

You are sitting South with this hand:

South
 ♠ AQJ87
 ♥ AK1063
 ♦ K9
 ♣ 9

East passes and you open this sweet hand 1♠. It has 17 HCP and they are mostly centered in the two long suits. That's a plus. West doubles and partner raises to 2♠. It's time to revalue your hand. Believe it or not, it's now worth about 23 points. Your two 5-card suits are called Quality Suits because they each hold 3 honor cards. The singleton club adds a couple of points. After East passes his partner's double, you should jump shift into 3♥. This is a forcing bid that shows a second suit and more than 18 total points. Even if your partner returns to spades at the 3-level, you should push on to game. This is the bidding:

West	North	East	South
		Pass	1♠
	2♠	Pass	3♥
Pass	3♠	Pass	4♠
All Pass			

West leads the ♥5 and you see your dummy:

Vul: E/W	North ♠ 10952 ♥ Q8 ♦ 865 ♣ KJ82	
West ♥5	South ♠ AQJ87 ♥ AK1063 ♦ K9 ♣ 9	

Your first job is to count your losers. You have 3 losers in the minor suits and a possible 4th loser if the ♠K is off side. You can win the lead in the dummy and take the spade finesse, but you are putting all your chances on the ♠K being in East. There is a better way.

The technique is called the Discovery Play. By playing the minor suits first, you can get a feel for the distribution of honors in the other suits. Since West doubled, you can assume he has

about 12 HCP. You and your partner have a total of 23. That leaves only 5 points for East. If East holds one of the minor suit aces, he can't hold the ♠K.

You win the ♥Q in the dummy and lead a diamond to your ♦K. This will lose to West's ♦A. He will take the second diamond and you will win his third diamond. Then lead the club to the dummy's ♣K. This will lose to East's ♣A. Now you know that the ♠K must be in West and the finesse won't work. The only hope is that the ♠K is singleton. After all, West did double 1♠ - showing shortness in that suit.

You win East's return and plunk down the ♠A. Luckily the ♠K falls and you can claim the rest of the tricks.

Here is the entire deal:

<div style="background-color: green; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> 6 </div>	N North ♠ 10952 ♥ Q8 ♦ 865 ♣ KJ82	<table border="1" style="font-size: 0.8em;"> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> <tr> <td>X</td> <td>2♠</td> <td>P</td> <td>1♠</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>3♣</td> <td>P</td> <td>4♣</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	X	2♠	P	1♠	P	3♣	P	4♣	P	P	P	P
	W	N	E	S														
	X	2♠	P	1♠														
	P	3♣	P	4♣														
P	P	P	P															
W West ♠ K ♥ 9542 ♦ AQJ43 ♣ Q73	E East ♠ 643 ♥ J7 ♦ 1072 ♣ A10654																	
S South ♠ AQJ87 ♥ AK1063 ♦ K9 ♣ 9																		
		4♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0																

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