

MAXIMIZING NOTRUMP

How great is this hand? A maximum 1NT opening.

S	South
♠	K5
♥	AK104
♦	8432
♣	AK4

Your partner responds 2♣ (Stayman) to try to uncover an 8-card major suit fit, and rebids 3NT over your 2♥ rebid.

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1NT
Pass	2♣	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

You see the ♣9 led by West. What is your plan?

N	North
♠	QJ63
♥	52
♦	AQ10
♣	Q1083

West leads ♣9

S	South
♠	K5
♥	AK104
♦	8432
♣	AK4

Need 9 tricks, you start by counting your instant winners. You have 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 3 clubs. You need 3 more tricks to make your contract. You can get 2 more by promoting the two spade honors; 1 or 2 more by finessing the diamonds; and possibly 1 more if the clubs. The club lead is the best lead you could have gotten. Because you have the ♠10 and ♠9, you can simply cover the ♣9 with the ♠10 and it will either hold the trick or be covered by East's ♣J. Either way, you have four clubs tricks.

So your contract is safe. Now is the time to think about overtricks. You should try to finesse the diamond. Lead a club back to your hand and lead a diamond to the dummy's $\heartsuit 10$. If this holds, come back your hand, again with a club, and repeat the finesse; this time inserting the $\heartsuit Q$. Now lead a low spade to the the $\spadesuit K$ in your hand and keep playing spades until the opponents take their $\spadesuit A$. They will probably lead a heart, which you win with the $\heartsuit A$, and lead another diamond to your dummy's $\heartsuit A$. Both opponents follow, so you can now take your dummy's good $\clubsuit Q$ and $\spadesuit J$ and get back you your hand with the $\heartsuit K$ and cash the 13th diamond in your hand. You should end up with 12 tricks because of your good luck in the 3-3 split of the diamond, the club lead and the fact that the $\heartsuit KJ$ were both in West.

However, if you didn't take all those precautions you would have only made 10 or 11 tricks. In matchpoint play, you always try to maximize your tricks.

This is the entire deal:

D 8	N North	W N E S
	\spadesuit QJ63 \heartsuit 52 \diamonds AQ10 \clubsuit Q1083	P P P 1NT P 2 \clubsuit P 2 \heartsuit P 3NT P P P
W West		E East
\spadesuit 10972 \heartsuit Q63 \diamonds KJ7 \clubsuit 962		\spadesuit A84 \heartsuit J987 \diamonds 965 \clubsuit J75
	S South	
	\spadesuit K5 \heartsuit AK104 \diamonds 8432 \clubsuit AK4	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/kvoye7e> , 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. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.