

TAKING A CHANCE

You dealt this hand when neither side is vulnerable:

S	South
♠	AK104
♥	AJ75
♦	K5
♣	987

You have a typical 15 HCP 1NT opening. Your partner transfers into spades and you accept the transfer with 2♠ on your rebid. Suddenly, West inserts a 3♦ overcall. There are two more passes and it is back to you. Do you pass or bid 3♠?

There shouldn't be a hesitation. Partner is promising at least 5 spades and with a 9-card trump fit, you are protected by The Law of Total Tricks to the 3-level. His pass indicates less than 8 points, even if you are set a trick or two, that wouldn't be as much as the opponents make in 3♦.

The final contract is 3♠ and West leads the ♥K. What are you thinking?

N	North
♠	J8765
♥	6432
♦	J
♣	AJ6

West leads ♥K

S	South
♠	AK104
♥	AJ75
♦	K5
♣	987

If spades break 2-2, there are no trump losers; and if they are longer in the East, you can finesse the outstanding ♠Q. There are three heart losers but if they break 3-2, you can limit the suit to 2 losers. There are 2 possible diamond losers in your hand but one of them can be ruffed in the dummy; and 2 more losers in the club suit. You are missing the ♣KQ10, but if they lie right, you may be able to develop an extra trick in the suit. So if things go right, you make the contract and limit the hand to 2 heart, 1 diamond and 1 club losers.

You duck the first heart, hoping West will misplay and lead his ♥Q. This is called the Bath Coup. It sets up your ♥J as a winner when you win the second heart with your ♥A. You are happy that East played a ♥10 on the first heart, either signalling encouragement or a doubleton. West is too good to fall into your trap. He switches to the ♣2. What should you play from the dummy?

The most probable lie of the clubs has the king and queen on opposite sides. If you play the ♣J it will be captured by either the ♣Q or ♣K. Then East will lead another club knocking out your ♣A. You must assume the ♣10 in West and play the ♣6. If East wins with either top honor you can finesse the ♣J against the other honor through West. Here, East plays low and you win the trick in your hand with the ♣7. Why didn't he take the trick. Either he is missing all of the honors or he is saving one of the high honors to take your ♣J. Most likely, it is the latter case.

It's now time to test the spades. Lead the ♠A from your hand and watch the cards that are played. Unfortunately, West shows out on the first spade trick. Fortunately, it is West that was void and not East. All you have to do is go to the dummy with the ♣A and lead the spades through East. It will take all the trump in your hand, but you will limit the suit to no losers. But as long as you are leading a club to the dummy, you might as well finesse the ♣J in the unlikely event that East doesn't have the ♣Q or ♣K. This fails to West's ♣Q and he returns the ♥10. Win this with the ♥A and go to the dummy's ♣A. The next 3 tricks will extract all of East's trump. You end in your hand and realize that there is only one more heart outstanding. You give West his heart trick and he returns a diamond to East's ♦A. Now East has to lead a diamond to your ♦K and your last trump. You've lost 2 hearts, 1 diamond and 1 club, just like your plan dictated.

This is the entire deal:

11 D	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ J8765 ♥ 6432 ♦ J ♣ AJ6	P 3♦ P	Transfer to Spades 2♥ P P	P P P	1NT 2♠ 3♣
W West			E East		
♠ KQ9 ♥ KQ9 ♦ Q76432 ♣ K1042			♠ Q932 ♥ 108 ♦ A1098 ♣ Q53		
	S South				
	♠ AK104 ♥ AJ75 ♦ K5 ♣ 987				3♠ S NS: 0 EW: 0

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

<http://tinyurl.com/y86v3uva> , 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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