

For a future LSBC Newsletter and Corner

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Proper hand evaluation leads to a good contract. With a bit of luck it even makes.

image.png

E Pass

S 3NT (I like to play this as gambling: Showing a running 7+ card minor and no outside Ace or King. However, this partner plays it as a 25-27 hcp hand. I have all 4 aces. Even Goren added a point for having all 4 aces. Marty Bergen suggests adding a point for 3 aces. An ace is worth about 4.3 points. The 10 with the AK of spades could be useful. That's a plus. The AQ combination in clubs is worth more than 6 points - unless West is rude enough to have the King of clubs behind me. So, I have 24 hcp + 1 for the aces + extras in clubs and spades - and all prime values - aces and Kings and a Queen with the ace. This is an easy 3NT bid.)

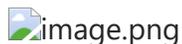
W Pass

N Pass (This is a difficult bid. Normally with a 5 card major, you transfer partner into your 5 card major and then bid notrump to let your partner choose between your 5 card major and notrump. However, that is awkward on this hand, as North would bid 4D, South would bid 4H and North would bid 4NT. Now South would be choosing between 4NT and 5H - not a good choice. Also as a practical matter unless you are playing with an established partnership the 4NT bid could be misinterpreted as some form of Blackwood.

So, North is best either passing like it did, or transferring to hearts and hoping South has 3 of them. Either choice is acceptable, but my choice is to transfer to 4H and leave it there. The North hand looks to be of little use in any contract but hearts. And my old partner always told me to be an optimist.

But, there I am in 3NT.)

West leads the Queen of spades.

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I suspect that the lead is from QJ, seems likely that West has 4 of them for that lead against notrump. I win the ace and give thanks that I didn't get a diamond lead.

Now I pray that the QJ of hearts are doubleton. I play the AK of hearts, They're not. Rats.



I can't score 9 tricks without dummy's hearts so I play my last heart to East's Queen. I hope to reach dummy with the 9 of spades. Maybe North knew the 9 of spades would be an entry to the hearts - probably not.



East wins the Queen of hearts and makes the normal lead of the Jack of clubs, I put in the Q which loses to the King. Guess the AQ of clubs were only worth 4 points on this deal.



Now it's my lucky day when West returns a club instead of a diamond. Defense is hard.



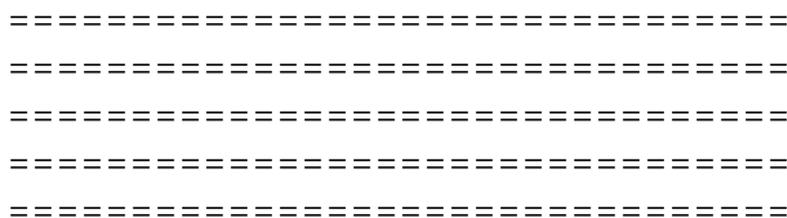
My 9 of clubs is now good, and I play the K and then the 10 of spades letting West have its Jack but that's it for the defense. I win the return and take the rest of the tricks. Taking:

- 3 spades
- 4 hearts
- 1 diamond
- 1 club

Bonus question. West can set me by leading the King and then the Queen of diamonds. I would duck twice. Then I would win the third diamond lead. Then when East gets in with the Queen of hearts, East cashes another diamond. So, the defense scores:

- 1 spade
- 3 diamonds
- 1 heart
- 5 tricks - down one.

There's a second way the defense can set me. Check out the screen shots to see the play where the defense made a choice that helped me before reading the rest.



When I played a heart to East's Queen, West had to make an uncomfortable discard. West discarded the 2 of spades, a better choice would have been a club (not the King).

If West had kept the 2 of spades. West could let me win the K 10 of spades, and saved the protected Jack for my 8 of spades. The only card I could reach dummy with.

Finally my partner chose better than I would have. 4 hearts is hopeless. It likely loses:

1 spade

1 heart

2 diamonds

1 club

The most common score was 3H down 1. I would likely be in 4H down 2.