

♠♥♦♣ COUNTING FROM THE LEAD ♠♥♦♣

East deals and passes. This is your hand:

S	South
♠	K52
♥	AK2
♦	Q72
♣	A1052

You have 16 very balanced points and open 1NT. Your partner raises you to 3NT. West leads the ♠4 and you see this dummy:

N	North
♠	Q63
♥	1054
♦	A93
♣	KJ76

West's Lead: ♠4

S	South
♠	K52
♥	AK2
♦	Q72
♣	A1052

Counting your winners, you have 1 Spade, 2 Hearts, 1 Diamond and 2 Clubs. You need 3 more tricks. You have two finesses available: the ♦Q and the ♠Q (depending if you don't see the ♠A on this first trick). But there is no doubt about the Clubs. You must find the ♣Q!

Lets look at the Club suit. You have 8 Clubs, so there are 5 outstanding. Assuming they break 3-2, the odds favor the defender with the 3 Clubs to hold the ♣Q. The odds are 60/40 that the ♣Q will reside in the long suit. Although there were no hints during the bidding, West did lead the ♠4. He leads 4th best from the longest and strongest. That means that he started with 4 Spades and he doesn't have a 5-card suit. That also means that his shape is most probably, 4432 or 4333. So the odds favor West to hold a 3-card Club suit, rather than East. These odds are not overwhelming, but they are better than a pure guess.

Play low on the Spade lead and hope East puts up the ♠A. Unfortunately, he plays the ♠9, and you win your ♠K. Then, start the Club suit by leading the ♣A. You don't want to lose the finesse to a singleton ♣Q in East. Since both defenders play low to the ♣A, lead the ♣2 up to the ♣J. This holds. Now you can later, lead up to the dummy for the marked finesse against West's ♣Q.

But while in the dummy, lead a low Diamond to your ♦Q, in hand. Unfortunately, this loses to West's ♦K. West leads the ♠J and you might as well cover it with the ♠Q. East wins his ♠A. You have lost both finesses in the "pointed" suits. Your only hope is for something good to happen in Hearts.

You come to hand in Hearts and lead a Club up to dummy; then play the last Club to fell the ♣Q. All this time, East has been discarding Hearts. When you lead your second low Heart, East plays his last Heart, the ♥J, and West must play the ♥Q under your ♥A. Now your ♥10 is good for the 9th trick. Miracles sometimes do happen.

This is the entire deal:

	N North ♠ Q63 ♥ 1054 ♦ A93 ♣ KJ76	W N E S P P 1NT P 3NT P P P
	W West ♠ J874 ♥ Q3 ♦ K85 ♣ Q943	
	S South ♠ K52 ♥ AK2 ♦ Q72 ♣ A1052	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yb5ahr3d>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. If you don't want to see the opponents hands, click on the white area in the South hand before you start.

Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own.