LOOKING FOR AN EXTRA TRICK

North dealt and passed. East opened 1♣ and it is your turn to make a call:

S | South

♠ AKQ1095
♥
♦ AK4
♣ 9542

You might want to overcall 1♠, but this hand is too strong for a simple overcall. These should be in the range of 7 to 17 total points. You have 16 HCP, but the top quality six card spade suit and the void in hearts makes the hand worth at least 2 points more. You have a self sufficient spade suit. That means is has enough length and quality to play opposite a singleton spade. Better to double and then rebid the spades after your partner names one of the minor suits.

Over your double, West bids 1♥ and your partner passes. This is a free bid for him and his pass means that he must have a hand of less than 6 points. East raises to 4♥ and it is back to you.

You might be able to set 4♥ if both opponents hold at least two spades. But doubling them and setting them 1 trick – or even 2 tricks – isn't as much as what you can make in 4♠. But of course, if you can't make 4♠, then any positive score will be better for you. When I played this hand recently, I rebid 4♠, which East doubled.

West leads the ♥A and you partner tables this hand:

N | North

♠ 874
♥ 1064
♦ Q1065
♣ 863

West leads ♥A

South
♠ AKQ1095
♥
♦ AK4
♣ 9542

Just as you expected, your partner is nearly broke. But you are happy to see the ♦Q1065. You have 6 spade tricks and 3 diamond tricks. All you need is one more trick. This will require finding the ♦J. You can leave this until later, after you gather more information about the opponents hands.

You win the opening lead in your hand and play the ♠AK. Both opponents follow suit and all of a sudden another possibility arises. Yes, you could finesse either way against the ♦J, which is a 50% probability. Or you can hope for a 3-3 diamond split (33%) or even a 4-2 split, with the ♦J falling on the second trick (34%). Does any other alternative look better?

Now that you have a trump left in the dummy, there is a 100% option. If you immediately turn to the club suit, you will lose 3 tricks but you will be able to ruff your 4th club using dummy's last spade. But there is no risk to play the top three diamonds first. If they do break 3-3, you will get your 10th trick immediately. You can give them their 3 clubs and claim. If the ♦J doesn't fall under the first three diamonds, you will start in on the clubs. Each time they win, they will return either a heart or the last diamond. You ruff these in your hand. Eventually, they will have to lead a suit that you can ruff in the dummy. You hand is cold for 4♠ and since it was doubled, you collect +590 points

This is the entire deal:

	North	W	N	E	S
D 1	**N** North		P	1♣	X
	♠ 874	1♥	P	4♥	4♠
	♥ 1064	P	P	X	P
	♦ Q1065	P	P		
	♣ 863				

W West		**E** East
♠ 32		♠ J6
♥ AKQJ72		♥ 9853
♦ 973		♦ J82
♣ J7		♣ AKQ10

S South
♠ AKQ1095
♥
♦ AK4
♣ 9542

4♠x S   NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: http://tinyurl.com/y87r5qou , 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.