

♠♥♦♣ PLANNING CHECKLIST ♠♥♦♣

You are the dealer, with this hand:

| | |
|---|-------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | 63 |
| ♥ | AKJ97 |
| ♦ | AQ2 |
| ♣ | KJ7 |

You open 1♥ and your partner responds 4♥. This is a pre-emptive response promising 5 Hearts and from 9 down to about zero points. It is based on The Law of Total Tricks, which says that you will usually do well if you bid to the total number of trump in the partnership. Even if you go down, you will score more than letting the opponents play in their best fit.

The opponents are silent throughout. That is the benefit of jumping to the 4-level on the first response. For East to enter the bidding at the 4-level is a big risk, and North hoped to inject that element of fear into his opponent.

West leads the ♠A, and you see the dummy:

| | |
|---|--------|
| N | North |
| ♠ | 1087 |
| ♥ | Q10832 |
| ♦ | KJ9 |
| ♣ | 54 |

West's Lead: ♠A

| | |
|---|-------|
| S | South |
| ♠ | 63 |
| ♥ | AKJ97 |
| ♦ | AQ2 |
| ♣ | KJ7 |

Notice that you have 22 HCP and your opponents have 18. They also have a Spade fit. With a normal slow bidding sequence, you would be battling the opponents for part score and since they have Spades, the master suit, they would probably win.

West follows up his ♠A with the ♠K and a small spade. East follows with the ♠5, ♠4 and ♠Q in that order. You ruff the 3rd Spade.

You have the 2 immediate Spade losers and 2 possible Club losers.

Since you can't do anything about the Spade losers, you need to find a way of eliminating one of the Club losers.

There are 4 main ways of eliminating losers from your hand, in a suit contract:

- Ruffing in the dummy
- Discarding on a long suit in the dummy
- End Playing the opponents
- Finessing

This checklist accounts for well over 85% of the techniques you will use.

Since there is nothing you can ruff in the dummy, nor are there any long suits in the dummy, you are left with end plays and finessing.

An end play would work if you can get them to lead a club, but in order for that to happen, you must throw them into the lead. The only suit you can throw them in with is the Club suit, so that leaves – the finesse.

Now the question is, should you finesse the ♣J or the ♣K?

As in most finessing decisions, it's best to wait until the end and see if you can figure out the nature of the opponents hands.

After winning the 3rd Spade, you draw trump. Then you play the Diamonds. You've notice that West started with 1 Heart and both opponents followed to the three Diamonds. Now you can place all the outstanding points and the position of the ♣A.

East started with the ♠Q. West started with 4 Spades, the ♠AKJ; 1 Heart and 3 or 4 Diamonds and 4 or 5 Clubs. If West also held the ♣A, he would hold 12 HCP and a hand that would have doubled your 1♥ opening. Therefore, you can confidentially lead a small club up to your ♣K and score your 4♥ contract.

This is the entire deal:

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| 198 D | N North | W N E S |
| | ♠ 1087 ♥ Q10832 ♦ KJ9 ♣ 54 | P 4♥ P P |
| W West | E East | |
| ♠ AKJ9 ♥ 6 ♦ 10654 ♣ Q1093 | ♠ Q542 ♥ 54 ♦ 873 ♣ A862 | |
| | S South | 4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0 |
| | ♠ 63 ♥ AKJ97 ♦ AQ2 ♣ KJ7 | |

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/ycc7nt9z>, 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.

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