

REASON OUT YOUR DEFENSE

You are sitting South and East, your RHO, opens the bidding with 1♣. You overcall 1♦ and West responds 1NT. Your partner passes and East jumps to 3NT. This becomes the the final contract and your partner leads the ♦7. You see this dummy:

North	East
♦7	♠AKJ
	♥AQ7
	♦82
	♣QJ1097
South	
♠83	
♥J63	
♦AQJ95	
♣A32	

West puts up dummy's ♦8. What do you play on this first trick?

East has 17HCP but he added a point for the strong 5-card club suit. Thus, he was too strong for a 1NT opening. He started with 1♣ and planned to jump to 2NT over his partner 1-level response. When he respnded 1NT, he had to make his jump into 3NT.

Your first job is to analyze the lead. Was it the 4th down from his longest suit? Was it a top of nothing lead?. You can use the Rule of 11 to test the 4th down lead. Subtract 7 from 11. The difference, 4, is the number of cards higher than the seven, that remain in the East, South and West hands. You can see 5 cards higher than the 7. Therefore, this can't be from three higher cards. It is more likely from a doubleton or singleton.

Here is the entire deal:

Since it is a fairly high card, assume the lead was from the top of a doubleton. That means the declarer has a four card diamond suit headed by the ♦K10xx. If you insert the ♦J or the ♦A the declarer makes his contract. If you play your ♦9, declarer will win the ♦10 and you will set the contact. That is, as long as partner has one entry into his hand and he still has a diamond to lead back. Let's see why?

If you play the ♦J declarer will duck and you will lead another diamond - either your ♦A followed by your ♦Q; or your ♦Q, losing to West's ♦K. Now your

partner is out of diamonds and if he ever does get the lead he cannot lead the diamond. You still must knock out declarer's second diamond stopper and you only have one side entry into your hand, the ♣A.

If you play the ♦9, however, declarer will not resist winning his ♦10. Now your partner will have another diamond when he gets the lead and you can force out declarer's ♦K. When you eventually get the lead with your ♣A, you can clear the diamond suit, taking 3 diamonds. If declarer ducks your ♦9, if doesn't do him any good. You follow up with the ♦AQ and when you get back in with the ♣A, your ♦J captures his remaining ♦10.

The only entry your partner can hold is the ♣K. Declarer must knock out both his ♣K and your ♣A to run dummy's clubs. The first time he leads a club, partner does rise with his ♣K and sends back his remaining ♦4. This time you do insert the ♦J and the declarer wins his last diamond stopper, the ♦K. He must lead another club but when you win the ♣A, your ♦AQ collects West's last diamonds and your ♦5 takes the setting trick.

Here is the entire deal:

14 ^D	N North	W	N	E	S
	♠ 109752 ♥ 10952 ♦ 74 ♣ K6	1NT	P	3NT	1♣ 1♦ P
W West		E East			
♠ Q64 ♥ K84 ♦ K1063 ♣ 854		♠ AKJ ♥ AQ7 ♦ 82 ♣ QJ1097			
	S South	3NT W NS: 0 EW: 0			
	♠ 83 ♥ J63 ♦ AQJ95 ♣ A32				

In notrump, when declarer has two stoppers to knock out in your suit, it is usually best to get him to use them as soon as possible. Allowing him to duck increases his chances of making his contract.

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

<http://tinyurl.com/p6o7vqp> , 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.