

♠♥♦♣ SQUEEZE THEM ♠♥♦♣

Your partner is the dealer and opens 1♦. This is your hand:

S	undefined
♠	K4
♥	AJ8
♦	KQ72
♣	Q864

You have 15 HCP and a balanced hand. You know you will end up in a game. But what game?

You know partner doesn't have a 5-card Major so there is no fit in Spades or Hearts. There is a fit in Diamonds, but a game in Diamonds requires 11 tricks. An easier game is in Notrump but you aren't sure of all the stoppers.

There is a common convention that can help you explore. It is called the Inverted Minor. A double raise of either minor opening (3♣ or 3♦) shows a fit in the minor and a weakish hand of 6-9 points. A simple raise to the opener's minor suit (2♦ or 2♣) shows 10 or more points, at least 4-card support in Diamonds and a willingness to explore for a game. It encourages the opener to start bidding his controls up the line. It is called Inverted Minor because it is just the inverse of what you would respond if Partner opened a Major.

Over your 2♦ response, partner rebids 3♣. This shows a Club stopper but denies a stopper in the Majors. Since it is a 3-level bid, it shows extras and confirms there is enough in the partnership for a game.

You have the Heart stopper, and a stopper in Spades if the Spade lead comes from West. You must be the Notrump Declarer, so you ignore your Heart control and just rebid 3NT.

This the auction:

West	North	East	South
	1♦	Pass	2♦!
Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
All Pass			

West leads the $\heartsuit 10$ and you see this dummy.

N	undefined
\spadesuit	82
\heartsuit	K4
\diamondsuit	AJ54
\clubsuit	AK1095

West Leads: $\heartsuit 10$

S	undefined
\spadesuit	K4
\heartsuit	AJ8
\diamondsuit	KQ72
\clubsuit	Q864

If North had opened his longest suit – $1\clubsuit$ –, his rebid of $2\diamondsuit$ would have been a Reverse and would have promised at least 17 HCP. Therefore, he opened $1\diamondsuit$ to avoid a reverse. It is a small lie that many bidders use to avoid getting too high if Partner has a very weak hand.

Unless the Clubs split 4-0 (10%) you have 11 tricks off the top. Should that satisfy you? Not if you're playing in Matchpoint Duplicate. Everybody else in 3NT (the par contract) will also take 11 tricks. Can you take an extra trick?

You see the possibility of an extra Heart trick by finessing the $\heartsuit J$. That has a 50% probability of success. Let's look a little deeper.

Why do you think West led the $\heartsuit 10$? This was a passive lead. Obviously, with both you and your partner bidding diamonds, West wasn't trying to develop the suit. He must have had bad leads in the other suits.

The opponents have 9 Spades between them. Why didn't West lead a Spade? Probably because he held the ♠A. He could be holding a Spade tenace – the ♠AQ(xxx)- and was waiting for you or his Partner to lead them, allowing him 2 Spade tricks.

Since you can take the first 11 tricks, there is a possibility that West also holds the ♥Q, guarded. By the time you lead to the 9th trick, East has already discarded 5 Hearts. East can't hold the ♥Q. You envision West holding the ♠AQ and the ♥Qxx. He must either discard a Heart or the ♠Q on the 9th trick. If he drops a Heart, you play the ♥K, then the ♥A, expecting to see the ♥Q drop. If he drops the ♠Q, you throw him in with the ♠K and he has to lead a Heart into your ♥AJ.

This is the entire deal:

D 1		N North		E East	
		♠82 ♥K4 ♦AJ54 ♣AK1095		♠J1096 ♥109532 ♦3 ♣J72	
W West		W	N	E	S
♠AQ753 ♥Q76 ♦10986 ♣3		1♦	Pass	2♦	
		Pass	3♣	Pass	3NT
		Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
		S South		3NT South	
		♠K4 ♥AJ8 ♦KQ72 ♣Q864		0 0	

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

<https://tinyurl.com/2zphgeny>, 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. <https://tinyurl.com/2p3hmb44>