

♠♥♦♣ TOUGH DECISIONS ♠♥♦♣

You are playing in a Team Game. You are vulnerable; the opponents are not. This is your hand:

S	undefined
♠	9743
♥	AKQJ8
♦	AK2
♣	K

East dealt and passed. You have 20 HCP, even though the ♣K is probably worthless. You are going to open 1♥ and if partner responds 1♠, you will raise to game. If he responds 1NT you are strong enough to reverse to 2♠. Although he will be denying 4 Spades, your reverse will show your strength and is forcing so you will raise to game in Hearts if partner shows minimum values with a rebid of 2NT.

Over your 1♥ opening, West overcalls 3♣. Your partner responds 3♥. This is a weak raise, since he has other options with a stronger hand. It shows 3 card support and from 6 to 9 HCP.

East passes and you raise to 4♥. This is passed around to East who pipes up with a 5♣ bid. This is obviously a furthering of West's 3♣ pre-empt. They are sacrificing to your vulnerable game. Your choices are to make a penalty double or to push to 5♥.

The vulnerability could not be worse for you. If you can make 5♥ you score +650. To equal that in penalty, you will have to set them 4 tricks. That requires taking a total of 6 tricks. You can only see 4 tricks against 5♣. And that is if you are lucky enough to find each opponent with 2 Hearts and 2 Diamonds. If Hearts or Diamonds split badly, you won't take even that.

On the other hand, if you lose 3 tricks in 5♥, and go set, you will score even worse than setting them by only 1 trick.

You flip a coin and decide to bid 5♥. Thankfully, you aren't doubled 👍

West leads the ♣A and you see this dummy.

N	undefined
♠	AQ6
♥	742
♦	J106543
♣	J

West Leads: ♣A

S	undefined
♠	9743
♥	AKQJ8
♦	AK2
♣	K

You count 7 tricks in your hand and 1 in the dummy. You need 3 more tricks for your contract, and they can only come from Diamonds.

For his second lead, West places the ♠8 on the table. What are you thinking?

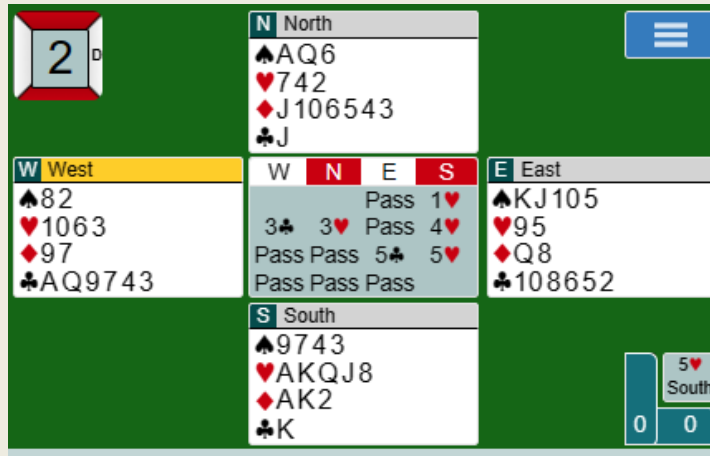
The ♠K is obviously in East. If you finesse the ♠Q and it loses, East will likely lead another Spade and knock out your only entry to the dummy. Then, if the ♦Q doesn't fall under the ♦AK, there will be no way to access the Diamonds and you will end up with only those original 8 tricks.

But if you play low in the dummy, East is stuck. He can't play Spades without giving you 2 stoppers. Yes, you will go down 1 trick, but that is better than the 3 tricks you would go set if you played the ♠Q.

On the other hand, if the Diamonds break 2-2 or the ♦Q is singleton or doubleton, not taking the ♠A on trick 2 will give up an overtrick. That is where the form of scoring matters. The difference of 1 trick at imps scoring is inconsequential. But it could mean the difference between a top board and an average board in matchpoint play.

Tough Decisions!

This is the entire deal:



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

<https://tinyurl.com/2pw8tuac>, 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>