

COUNTING TRICKS AND LOSERS

You are the dealer and you pick up this 21 HCP hand. This is an unbalanced hand, having two doubletons. Your 6-card heart suit makes it worth 2 more points.

S	South
♠	32
♥	AKQ965
♦	KQ9
♣	AK

When considering a 2♣ opening you want to check that you have no less than 4 quick tricks and no more than 4 losing tricks. An AK counts as 2 quick tricks and a KQ counts as one. So you qualify there. You have 2 spade losers and 1 diamond loser, so you don't have more than 4 losers. Therefore, this hand should be opened 2♣.

Partner makes a waiting bid of 2♦ and you bid your hearts at the 2-level. North rebids 3♣. This is called a second negative. He is saying that he doesn't hold a king, ace or two queens, and usually hasn't support of your suit. This also gives him permission to pass your next sign-off bid at the 3-level.

But, before you can make a bid, East overcalls 3♠. What should you do now? You can pass, double or bid on. You see 6 tricks in your hand, with East playing in a spade contract. But these the 3 heart tricks depend on East and West both holding 3 hearts. This is highly unlikely. In fact, East's overcall was probably made, in part, based on his shortness in hearts. You might, in fact, only take your two clubs and one diamond. Doubling 3♠ is definitely wrong.

Letting them play in 3♠ undoubled also seems wrong. They might even make 4♠. Let's count those losers again. You have 2 definite spade losers and the ♦A. You also have another diamond loser. But if partner holds as little as the ♦J or the ♣Qxx, you can eliminate the second diamond loser. I hope you would rebid 4♥ with this exceptional hand.

West leads the ♠6, his partner suit.

N	North
♠	1087
♥	J103
♦	J863
♣	872

West leads ♠6

S	South
♠	32
♥	AKQ965
♦	KQ9
♣	AK

East wins the ♠J and leads the ♠A, his partner following with the ♠5. West now leads the ♠K. What do you do?

West has signaled high low in spades, ready for a ruff. You must ruff before him, and if you ruff low with the ♥5, you will most likely be overruffed. You have plenty of high trump. Go up with the showy ♥A! Now you can pull trump in 3 rounds, give up the ♦A and claim.

This is the entire deal:

11 D	N North	W N E S
	♠ 1087	P 2♦ P 2♠
	♥ J103	P 3♣ 3♠ 4♥
	♦ J863	P P P
	♣ 872	
W West		E East
♠ 65		♠ AKQJ94
♥ 872		♥ 4
♦ A42		♦ 1075
♣ QJ963		♣ 1054
	S South	
	♠ 32	
	♥ AKQ965	
	♦ KQ9	
	♣ AK	
		4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/ya29p96z>, 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.