

USING SCIENCE TO HELP YOUR BRIDGE GAME

You are sitting in the South. There are three passes to you.

South
♠ AKJ8
♥ J105
♦ AK4
♣ 762

You are going to open this 16 HCP hand 1NT. Your partner raises you to 3NT in an uncontested auction, and that is the final contact.

West leads the ♣5 and this dummy comes down:

	North	
	♠ Q103	
	♥ 72	
	♦ QJ95	
	♣ AQ108	
West		East
♣5		
	South	
	♠ AKJ8	
	♥ J105	
	♦ AK4	
	♣ 762	

First, you count your winners and see how much work you'll have to do. You have 4 spades, 4 diamonds and 1 club for your 9 trick contract. If you win the ♣A and take you 9 tricks, you will not get a very good score if you are playing in a match point game. Yes, in imps or rubber bridge, overtricks don't mean too much. But in matchpoint play, even one overtrick could be the difference between a top score and an average one.

Overtricks should always be considered important as long as they don't risk the contract. You were very lucky you got a club lead. Your hearts suit doesn't have any stoppers and a heart lead could have been disastrous.

But the ♣5 is an interesting card. Opponents who use standard leads do this so their partners can read the lead and know how to play the suit. When you know the defender leads the 4th down in a notrump contract, you should apply the Rule of 11. This rule helps you place the high cards in the other hands.

The Rule of 11 says that if you subtract the card led of 11, the difference will represent the number of cards higher than the led card in the other three hands. In this deal, the card led is the five. Eleven minus five is six. That says there are six cards higher than the 5 in the

North, East and South hands combined. If you look at the North and South hands, you can see all 6 cards higher than than the 5. That means the dummy's ♣8 will win the trick. Furthermore, the King and Jack of clubs is in the West and and can easily be finessed.

Putting that all together, you play the ♣8 on the first trick and come back to your hand in diamonds or spades to lead a club up to the dummy. You will cover whatever card West plays. Now you will win three more clubs to add to the top 9 tricks. You will take 12 tricks in all, while your opponents must discard all their winning hearts.

The Rule of 11 can also be used by the partner of the leader. This often helps him defend the contract. In this hand, however, it was more beneficial to the declarer. That's what makes the game of bridge so nteresting and challenging.

Here is the entire hand:

♠ 8		N North ♠ Q103 ♥ 72 ♦ QJ95 ♣ AQ108	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>3NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	P	P	1NT	P	3NT	P	P	P			
W	N	E	S																
P	P	P	1NT																
P	3NT	P	P																
P																			
W West ♠ 942 ♥ K63 ♦ 86 ♣ KJ953		E East ♠ 765 ♥ AQ984 ♦ 10732 ♣ 4																	
	S South ♠ AKJ8 ♥ J105 ♦ AK4 ♣ 762		3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0																

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