♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ COUNT AND SQUEEZE ♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

*Note: You can read this article in the interactive VueBridge format by clicking on: https://tinyurl.com/yxvr3fem and selecting Board 3

West is the dealer and opens 1♠. Your partner overcalls 1NT and East passes. This is your hand:

S South
- ♠ 8
- ♥ 1042
- ♦ 107
- ♣ AK107653

Partner's overcall promises a good 15 to 18 points with at least one spade stopper. You feel you should be in game – but which game? Can you make 5♣? You should be able to envision 3 or 4 losers. A notrump game would be much easier. You raise to 3NT. This is what you would respond if partner opened 1NT.

3NT becomes the final contract and East leads the ♠5. Take over for North and plan the play:

S South
- ♠ 8
- ♥ 1042
- ♦ 107
- ♣ AK107653

East leads ♠5

N North
- ♠ QJ6
- ♥ KQ5
- ♦ AQ32
- ♣ QJ4

You have 1 spade, given the lead; 1 diamond and 7 clubs. Since this game is scored in matchpoints, overtricks are important. You can get 1 extra trick by finessing your hearts or you can get an extra trick by finessing the ♦Q. However, since you only have one spade stopper, giving up a trick to the ♥A is very dangerous.

You should always try to count the points around the table. This is more important when the opponents have opened or made revealing bids. You and your parner have 24 HCP. West needs at least 12 HCP for his opening. That leaves 4 HCP, at most, for East. Unfortunately, this is enough for East to hold the ♦K.

The line of play I would adopt is to win the 3rd spade trick and play out all 7 clubs. That will leave the defenders with 3 cards in their hands. Perhaps their discards will give you the information you need.

After you take your last club from the dummy, your hands look like this:

S	South
♠	
♥	104
♦	10
♣	

N	North
♠	
♥	K
♦	AQ
♣	

You have been counting the suits. There is one spade outstanding, which is presumedly with West. There is one heart outstanding, the ♥A. This could be in either hand. And, there are 4 diamonds outstanding including the ♦K. The two honors cannot be both in East's hand.

This is a no-risk ending. If both honors are in West, then the diamond finesse will produce the extra trick. If the ♦K is in West and the ♥A is in East, the diamond finesse will also give you the extra trick. If the two honors are reversed, East will win the finesse but will only have diamonds left to lead and you will take your ♦A and end with 9 tricks. There is a 67% probability that you will end up with 10 tricks.

This is the full deal:

			N	North		W	N	E	S
D	8		♠ QJ6			1♠	1NT	P	3NT
			♥ KQ5			P	P	P	
			♦ AQ32						
			♣ QJ4						

W West
♠ AK9432
♥ J73
♦ KJ95
♣

E East
♠ 1075
♥ A986
♦ 864
♣ 982

S South
♠ 8
♥ 1042
♦ 107
♣ AK107653

3NT N   NS: 0 EW: 0

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

https://tinyurl.com/y4tkep2z , 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.

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