

♠♥♦♣ COUNT YOUR TRICKS ♠♥♦♣

You are vulnerable; your opponents are not. West deals and it 3 passes to you. This is your hand:

S	South
♠	109
♥	A96
♦	AKJ107
♣	QJ5

The hand is balanced and has 15 HCP. You open 1NT and your partner invites with 2NT. What should you do? Partner has 8 or 9 HCP and with your 15, you are at least a trick short of game. However, there is more to hand evaluation than counting High Card Points. Is there anything in your hand that makes it worth more than 15 points?

There sure is. You have a lovely Quality 5-card Diamond suit that might easily provide 5 tricks, alone. The quacks (jacks and queens) are at least working. In Diamonds, the ♦J is surrounded by the ♦K and ♦10. Plus, the ♣Q and ♣J are working together to help give you a trick or two in Clubs. This hand is easily worth 2 more points and a raise to 3NT.

West leads the ♥3 and you see this dummy:

N	North
♠	A87
♥	K54
♦	Q93
♣	10864

Lead: ♥3

S	South
♠	109
♥	A96
♦	AKJ107
♣	QJ5

As in all notrump contracts, you first count your top tricks. You have 1 Spade, 2 Hearts and 5 Diamonds – 8 in all. You need 1 more. The trick can easily come from the Club suit. However, after winning this first trick, you are left with only a single stopper in Spades and Hearts. Each time you lose the lead in Clubs they will bang away at the Majors.

Normally, I tell my students that they should start work immediately on their “project suit.” That is, “do your work early”. These are both adages that are always used by bridge teachers.

But if defended adequately, this deal is doomed to failure. It’s time to rely on deception and luck 😊

That means you must hold off on the Club suit and play all the Diamonds. The opponents have only 5 between them and if they break normally, they will have to make several discards. There is a chance that those discards will magically turn a losing hand into a winner. If defended correctly, you can’t take 9 tricks. But defense is difficult when they can’t see into their partner’s hands.

I’ve played this hand several times with the robots, and each time, the defenders discard the wrong cards and the contract makes – sometimes with overtricks.

This is the entire deal:

	N North ♠ A87 ♥ K54 ♦ Q93 ♣ 10864	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>W</td> <td>N</td> <td>E</td> <td>S</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>1NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>2NT</td> <td>P</td> <td>3NT</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	P	P	P	1NT	P	2NT	P	3NT	P	P	P	
	W	N	E	S														
P	P	P	1NT															
P	2NT	P	3NT															
P	P	P																
W West ♠ J532 ♥ QJ83 ♦ 542 ♣ A3	E East ♠ KQ64 ♥ 1072 ♦ 86 ♣ K972																	
	S South ♠ 109 ♥ A96 ♦ AKJ107 ♣ QJ5	3NT S NS: 0 EW: 0																

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <https://tinyurl.com/2lh32out> 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.

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