

## AN EXERCISE IN COUNTING

This hand comes from the 2019 National Women's Teams. It is a good example of bidding, then a classic example of counting.

Firstly, the bidding.

Sitting, South you hold:

♠ 9  
♥ K 6 3 2  
♦ A 7 4  
♣ 10 9 8 6 4

West	North	East	South
1NT	2♣	Pass	?

West's 1NT opening bid showed 15-17 HCP.

Partner's 2♣ bid was Landy, showing at least 5-4 in the Majors.

What would you bid?

With the good 4-card heart support (a known fit), the singleton spade and Ace outside, it is reasonable to bid 4♥ (or use some sort of enquiry, should you have one). Personally, I would simply respond 4♥.

Now, the play.

You are in 4♥, South. West leads the ♦6 – 2 – Queen...

What are your thoughts about the hand and contract?

♠ A K 10 6  
♥ A J 10 8 5  
♦ 10 2  
♣ 7 3

♠ 9  
♥ K 6 3 2  
♦ A 7 4  
♣ 10 9 8 6 4

You know that West started with 15-17 HCP. This will serve you well as a starting point.

Your two hands have a total of 19 HCP, giving East-West a total of 21 HCP, with East holding 4-6 HCP.

Now you must draw some inferences from the lead (and what you already know).

Firstly, you should assume that West started with the ♦K and ♦J. East should have played the Jack if holding Q-J.

Secondly, you should look at the club suit. Whenever you are missing A-K-Q in a suit and the opening leader doesn't lead an honour, it is likely that they don't have the A-K or K-Q. After all, the lead of a sequence of honours would be preferable to leading from a King or tenace. Therefore, West holds the ♣A-Q, and probably the Jack, with East holding the King.

You have now accounted for 5 of East's points, assuming a maximum of 6 HCP. Therefore, you can now place the ♥Q with West.

Since you must trump two spades in your hand and score five other trump tricks (for 2 spades, 1 diamond, 2 spade ruffs and 5 trumps), you should now know how to play this hand.

Win the ♦A. Lead a spade to dummy's Ace, then trump a spade in hand. To return to dummy, lead a small heart and finesse the ♥10. Once East follows, you know you can deal with hearts either 2-2 or 3-1. Trump another spade in hand with the ♥K (for safety, and for convenience of re-entering dummy), then finesse in hearts again when West plays low. You can draw the last trump and you have your 10 tricks.

Here's the full hand, exactly as you envisaged in terms of honour cards:

	♠ A K 10 6	
	♥ A J 10 8 5	
	♦ 10 2	
	♣ 7 3	
♠ Q 8 5		♠ J 7 4 3 2
♥ Q 7 4		♥ 9
♦ K J 9 6		♦ Q 8 5 3
♣ A Q J		♣ K 5 2
	♠ 9	
	♥ K 6 3 2	
	♦ A 7 4	
	♣ 10 9 8 6 4	

Keep counting. So many bridge puzzles can be solved by drawing inferences and counting.

**Barbara Travis**

[www.bridgewithbarbara.com](http://www.bridgewithbarbara.com)