

## ENTRY MANAGEMENT

♠ 10 4  
♥ A Q 8 7  
♦ A 8 6 5 4 3  
♣ Q

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

You have reached 3NT by South, and West leads the ♥4. You try the ♥Q which wins.

As long as clubs break, you now have 6 club tricks, 1 spade, 1 diamond and 2 hearts.

But what if clubs don't break? If you cash the ♣Q, then cross to your ♠A to cash the two top clubs and discover a 4-2 or 5-1 break, you will finish with 3 clubs, 1 spade, 2 hearts and 1 diamond – 7 tricks.

A 3-3 break only occurs about 35.5% of the time, although you will also be fine if there is a doubleton Jack, increasing your odds. However, at Teams in particular, it is imperative to ensure the safety of your contract first, with overtricks being a secondary consideration. At Pairs, making as many tricks as possible is important, but you also want to work with the odds. Since the odds suggest that you will suffer a poor break about 60% of the time, you should be thinking about the safest way to make your game.

On this hand, you should lead the ♣Q at trick 2, East plays the ♣8, and you overtake with the King. Should the ♣J be a doubleton, you will make 6 club tricks anyway. Should the clubs break 3-3, you will be a trick 'behind' the field (35.5% of the time). Should the clubs break 4-2 (or 5-1), you will have 5 club tricks and your contract, when many of the field will go down.

Here's the hand, which was a typical layout:

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

If you got that hand right, give yourself a pat on the back!

The next hand comes from the National Women's Teams in Canberra, where Candice Ginsberg (South) and I were defending against 4♥, West.

	♠ 8 6		
	♥ K 9 8 7		
	♦ K 8 6 5		
	♣ Q 8 7		
♠ 9 4		♠ A K Q J 7	
♥ A Q 10 6 4		♥ J 5 3 2	
♦ 10		♦ J 9 4	
♣ A J 6 3 2		♣ 10	
	♠ 10 5 3 2		
	♥ void		
	♦ A Q 7 3 2		
	♣ K 9 5 4		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♣ (splinter)	Pass
4♥	All Pass		

With four decent trumps, I was more interested in gaining trump control than in getting a ruff, so I led my long suit – diamonds. Candice won the ♦A and returned a diamond, ruffed in hand. Though I couldn't see how we could defeat the contract, I had achieved my first objective, which was to make everyone have equal length in the trump suit.

At trick 3, declarer crossed to dummy with a spade, to lead the ♥J and finesse. As it turns out, both these plays were errors. Dummy was suddenly short of entries! *(They aren't such disastrous plays when playing matchpoint pairs, but if you want to ensure your contract – and we were playing teams – then they were 'unsafe' actions.)*

Just as when one holds an Ace, you have to know 'why' you want to win, as opposed to ducking. I knew I wanted to damage declarer's communications (and trump control), therefore I won the heart to lead another spade, severing declarer's entries between the hands. If declarer drew trumps, she would be stuck in her hand. If she led a spade, I could trump then lead another diamond, shortening declarer's trumps and ensuring I had another heart winner. If she led a club to the Ace, then ruffed a club, the hand would disintegrate because both hands were shortened. Declarer went down one trick.

Many people failed on this hand – some by leading the ♣A and ruffing, thus shortening BOTH hands – a fatal error. Those who made the hand realised to lead either ♥A and a small heart, or a small heart towards the Jack at trick 3.

Against us, declarer's error was that the contract looked 'too easy', so she took her eye off the ball, and forgot to allow for a bad trump break. Once the trumps broke badly, she had destroyed the communications (entries) between the hands.

*Lesson: Never think a contract looks 'too easy' (unless you are claiming 13 tricks at trick 1).*

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