

Declarer Play Challenge

By

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At IMP scoring ensuring you make your contract is the one priority. See how you do here.

Form of Scoring: IMPs. Contract: 3NT by South. Lead: 5♥

♠ 8 5 4

♥ A Q

♦ 7 5 4 2

♣ A K 6 4

♠ A Q

♥ J 9 4

♦ A K 10 8 3

♣ 10 5 3

Plan the play.

If you play the ♥Q you only have seven tricks, one spade and two in each of the other three suits. The first two important issues to recognize are:

- Spades is your weak suit, and
- East is the dangerous opponent as he can play a spade through your AQ tenace.

If you put in the heart queen and it loses to the king and a spade comes back, you will go down if the spade king is offside and the diamonds do not split 2-2.

A better plan is to win the ♥A and then play on diamonds. All you need is four diamond tricks, as long as you keep East off the lead. Then you can eventually set up a nine trick in hearts. So the 100% line of play is win the heart at trick one, then play a diamond covering East's card as cheaply as possible. If it loses, then diamonds were at worst 3-1 and the remaining diamonds are good. West cannot play on spades effectively. If he returns a heart to his partner's king that setups the ♥J as your nine trick, and a spade finesses is only for an overtrick. The full deal:

♠ 8 5 4

♥ A Q

♦ 7 5 4 2

♣ A K 6 4

♠ K 6 3

♠ J 10 9 7 2

♥ 10 8 6 5 3 2

♥ K 7

♦ —

♦ Q J 9 6

♣ Q 9 8 7

♣ J 2

♠ A Q

♥ J 9 4

♦ A K 10 8 3

♣ 10 5 3

So as a review, the play should go (underline determines who is on lead):

	West	North	East	South
Trick 1	<u>♥5</u>	A	7	4
Trick 2	♥2	<u>♦2</u>	6	8
Trick 3	7	A	2	<u>♣3</u>

Trick 4	♥3	<u>♦4</u>	J	A
Trick 5	6	Q	K	<u>♥9</u>
Trick 6	K	4	<u>♠J</u>	Q
Trick 7	<u>♠6</u>	5	9	A
Trick 8	8	K	J	<u>♣5</u>
Trick 9	♥8	<u>♦5</u>	9	10

Declarer now cashes his good diamonds and ♥J. In total he scores 1 spade, 2 hearts, 5 diamonds and 2 clubs for an overtrick.

One note on the play: Once the ♦8 winds trick two, declarer has enough entries in clubs to guarantee five diamond tricks, and the contract. So that is why it was safe to play a heart at trick five, setting up the heart Jack for his 10th trick.

Important Points to Remember

1. At team scoring always ensure your contract before trying to score overtricks.
2. Identify the defender which you either want to or must keep off the lead, and play accordingly.
3. 3NT is a race between the defenders and declarer. Declarer has to get to nine tricks before the opponents get five, and set the contract. As such whoever is ahead in the race may determine which suit(s) you need to attack.