

North Deals
None Vul

♠ K 6 5
♥ 8 4 2
♦ A J 3 2
♣ Q 10 3

♠ 9 8
♥ A K 10 3
♦ 10 5 4
♣ J 9 8 7

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 10 4 3
♥ Q 7 6
♦ K 9 8
♣ 6 5 4 2

♠ A Q J 7 2
♥ J 9 5
♦ Q 7 6
♣ A K

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2 ♠	Pass	3 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	

Lead: ♥ A

N/S edge into 4S. On West's lead of the ace of hearts, East wants a continuation, hoping that N/S have 3 each. So, East plays the 7 of hearts. When West continues with the king of hearts, East confirms that the 7 was encouraging by playing the 6 of hearts. West leads hearts again, and East takes their queen. N/S will lose the king of diamonds later for down one.

If East instead plays the 6 of hearts and then the 7 of hearts, West will have to guess. Lead another heart? Switch to diamonds or clubs? If they choose the latter, N/S will cash the second club, draw trumps, and discard the third heart in South on the queen of clubs. N/S will lose two hearts and a diamond, making their contract.

North Deals
None Vul

♠ A 9 6
♥ K 8 4
♦ K 6 4
♣ J 9 5 3

♠ Q J 7
♥ 3 2
♦ J 9 5 2
♣ 8 7 4 2

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ K 10 8 3 2
♥ J 10 9 5
♦ 10 8
♣ K Q

♠ 5 4
♥ A Q 7 6
♦ A Q 7 3
♣ A 10 6

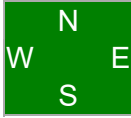
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

Lead: ♠ Q

A straightforward auction: South has 16 high card points and a balanced hand. After the 1 NT opening, North bids game (3 NT) with 11 high card points.

West makes an aggressive lead: the Q of spades. West's diamonds and clubs are weak, but spades or hearts may work - N/S didn't try to reach a game in either suit. The spade lead hits paydirt: East loves the lead. After North holds up (plays the 6 of spades), East must encourage by playing a higher spade. It's still unclear whether the ten is a possible trick, so I'd play the 8 of spades. West is paying attention and continues the spades with the jack. North takes the third spade trick and tries the hearts and diamonds but is unlucky - neither suit splits 3 - 3. When East gains entry with a high club, they run their spades to set the contract.

If East carelessly played a low spade on the first trick, West would be uncertain about spades and might switch to another suit. That would give N/S time to clear the KQ of clubs and win enough club tricks to make their contract.

North Deals None Vul	♠ 5 4 ♥ Q 9 3 ♦ A 10 3 ♣ K J 10 9 4		
♠ A K 2 ♥ 10 8 2 ♦ J 8 4 2 ♣ 6 5 2		♠ Q 8 7 6 3 ♥ J 7 5 4 ♦ Q 6 5 ♣ 8	
	♠ J 10 9 ♥ A K 6 ♦ K 9 7 ♣ A Q 7 3		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

Lead: ♠ A

South opens 1 NT with 17 high card points. North raises to 3 NT with 10 high card points. Unfortunately, this is one of the fairly infrequent hands where both hands have no spade stopper.

But defeating the contract still requires some diligence by E/W. West leads the obvious ace of spades. If East nonchalantly plays the 3 and then the 7, when the king is led, West will be uncertain of how to proceed. They may lead some other suit than spades, in which case declarer wins 10 tricks.

Instead, East signals encouragement in spades by first playing the 8 and then the 3 on the first two tricks. An observant West will notice the encouragement and will return a spade. E/W take the first 5 tricks and set the contract.