


**Board 1**

North Deals  
None Vul

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	Pass	1 ♥
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	2 NT
Pass	3 NT	All pass	

**Auction Commentary:** North's shape was scary for NT until partner bid the ♥s. Then partner invited to game with 10-11 HCP, and North's long suit accepted.

**Opening Lead:** ♥ Q (top of that long sequence)

**Planning the Play:** Counting sure winners in NT, Declarer finds 1 ♣ winner, 2 ♦s, and 2 ♥s. 2 more will easily come from promoting the ♠s, so that's 7 tricks. If we can run that ♦ suit, hoping for a 3/2 break in the suit, we're home free. What's the plan for the ORDER in which the play should go?

With the ♥ lead, they just took away the only outside entry we have to dummy. Now we cannot set up the suit by winning two rounds with the ♦ AK, and giving up the third round, because we'll never be able to get back there. Since we have to give them one high ♦, let's lose the first round of ♦s. (They can't hurt us yet!)

Exit the dummy with a small ♦. East will win and return partner's ♥ lead. Don't jump on that yet! If West has a 5-card ♥ suit, and you hold 5 between you and dummy, that means that East has 3 ♥s. What happens when you need to promote the ♠s? If East has the ♠ A, they'd send partner back a ♥ to that long suit, and we're doomed. Hold-up, and take the 3rd round. (They're already going to win the ♠ A and you've just given them a ♦. You can't hold up any more. So if the ♥ suit were split 4/4 between the defenders, there is no way to make this hand!)

**Takeaway:** The Hold-Up play -- where you purposely duck tricks and allow the other side to win them. Why? To cut communication between the two hands. In this case, we hope the ♠ A is with East, and we hope they started with just 3 ♥. When we give them the ♠ A, they'll have no more ♥s to get back to the West hand. (And since we also hoped the ♦s broke 3/2, you can see that this game has an element of luck. But the skills you learn can help you deal with the luck!)

**Board 4**

West Deals  
Both Vul

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



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

**Auction Commentary:** A flatter, uglier pair of game-going hands is hard to find. You may think, "Yes, it was the perfect NT shape; I am so happy." The reality is that the 4-3-3-3 hands are more difficult to play. But that's what we were dealt today, so let's try to take 9 tricks!


**Opening Lead:** ♥ 3 (4th best)

**Planning the Play:** We always count winners in NT, so we can see how many tricks we need to develop. The sure winners for EW are 3 ♠ tricks, 2 ♦ tricks, and 1 ♥. (But on that opening lead from North, it will be 2 ♥ tricks, for sure, no matter which hand has the ♥ K... and if South didn't produce the ♥ K at trick #1, we know it's got to be in the North.) We still need 2 more, and it looks like the ♣ suit (with Q-J-10-9-8) is ready to develop.

Since developing that suit will mean that we need to purposely lose to the opponents, we also need to think about the hand's distribution. If we let South in with a ♣, can they lead back something to hurt us? How about those ♥s? North lead 4th best, (and we own 6 pieces in ♥s), so South either has 2 or 3 ♥s. On trick #1, when South inserts the ♥ 10, Declarer should duck. Then you can win the next ♥ trick, and start the ♣s. Yes, a ♥ return is coming, but you know that it will be safe to lose to South then, because you made sure they were left with no more ♥s to get back to the long suit in North. You will win 3 ♠ tricks, 2 ♥s, 2 ♦s and 2 ♣s.

**Takeways:** Again, it's Declarer's Hold-Up Play for the win! You were able to cut the communication between the defenders, and avoid the long suit taking their tricks before you set up yours. No Trump is a race - and whoever sets up their suit first prevails!

**Board 6**  
 East Deals  
 E-W Vul

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

**Auction Commentary:** This is a shapely NT distribution. Who doesn't love a long minor to run in NT? :)

**Opening Lead:** ♥ 3 (4th best) Since there was no Stayman, we try to lead a major suit. That was easy for South holding that long, tasty ♥ suit.

**Planning the Play:** Sure winners in NT: 1 ♥ trick, 2 ♠s, 4 ♣s, and that ♦ suit will provide the rest. But let's think about the distribution. South has 4 or 5 ♥s, and we hold 5 - that leaves 3 or 4 ♥s for North. If North has 4 pieces, there's nothing we can do. But if North only has 3, because South started with 5 of them, we've learned we can make a Hold-Up play, and wait till trick #3 to win the ♥ A.

Let's check with the Rule of 7 -- Declarer adds the number of ♥s in both his hand and dummy -- (5). Subtract that 5 from the number 7 = 2. So we need to duck the ♥ A twice. (Of course, then we need to hope that the ♦ A is with North, so that when they win it, they will have no ♥s to send back to the long suit in South!)

Once you win the ♥ A, don't play the rest of the winners. Force out that ♦ A, starting with the ♦ K (high card from the short side). You're going to make an overtrick. Good job!

**Board 9**

North Deals  
E-W Vul

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

**Auction Commentary:** With another Ace, and that long minor, South would be thinking about slam. But since that's not a consideration here, we're not going to try to steer this to a minor suit contract. "T.N.T." -- with long minors, Think No Trump. 3NT requires 9 tricks, but 5 clubs (for the same game bonus) requires 11!

**Opening Lead:** ♠ 5 (4th best)

**Planning the Play:** Counting winners on that lead, there is just 1 ♠ winner, plus 3 ♥s, 2 ♦s and 1 ♣ winner. The ♣ suit is the ticket to the contract. When you take the ♣ finesse, it will be into the SAFE hand, not the one with the long ♠s. So we need to make sure it's the SAFE hand by ensuring that West doesn't have any more ♠s if he wins that finesse. East has 4-5 ♠s, we own 6 of them, so West has 2-3.

Let's dig a little deeper: using the Rule of 11, we know that on the lead of a 5, if that's indeed fourth best, there will be 6 cards higher than the 5 in the other 3 hands. South has 3 higher, North has 2, which means that West has just 1 card higher than the ♠ 5. (And on trick 1, we're going to see that ♠ 10 come out.)

We will need to Hold-Up once. If West started out with just 2 ♠s, they will be out of ♠s when we take the second trick. If West has 3 pieces in ♠s, with our 6 that would mean the East started with only 4. So, yes, West can lead one back then, but EW cannot defeat the contract winning just 3 ♠s and a ♣ :) So the PLAN is as follows:

- (1) Duck once, (2) Win the 2nd ♠, (3) Finesse into West, (4) Make the contract.

**Takeaway:** This hand demonstrates the importance of making a PLAN, and considering ALL the options -- each layout of the ♠s, and what those meant to the PLAN.