

Don't tell Andy!

Can I count on you? Try to piece together both the "high card count" each opponent may have and what might be the count/distribution of the suits also held. Thankfully, you can determine relative value by watching how opponents bid and how they choose to defend.

The opener West / LHO opens 1 spade that gets passed over to you sitting in fourth chair and you hold the following:

S Jakenow 77
♠AQ3
♥A3
♦AKJ6
♣8743

You hold a strong eighteen HCPs that includes three aces. Let's assume West had opened 1 spade with an average hand of 5+ spades and 12 points (since East passed on the first opportunity). That means there are 10 points shared by your partner North and East, so it's our hand. Bidding 1NT in the balancing chair would show 11-14 HCPs, so as with most strong hands, you should start with a double. LHO passes and partner bids 2 Hearts. What do you now bid? You should bid 2NT inviting game in NT. Partner accepts but you now face a challenging 3NT. You need a plan. Can I count on you?

N Robot
♠1086
♥K9876
♦875
♣KJ
W N E S
1♠ Pass Pass Dbl
Pass 2♥ Pass 2NT
Pass 3NT Pass Pass
Pass
S Jakenow 77
♠AQ3
♥A3
♦AKJ6
♣8743

Your first job before playing to the opening lead is to count the points in dummy and your own hand and that totals 25. LHO leads the spade 7 which must be a fourth best. The rule of 11 tells us that there are 4 spades higher than the 7, and you hold all them all, so you confidently start by winning on board with the spade 10. Good start but there is work to be done. Given that board entries are scarce and since RHO has little in HCPs but can hold a Queen, you lead a diamond and take a finesse which wins. Your trick count is now up to 8 (2S, 2H, 3D, 1C) since LHO should hold the Club ace as opener. Time to count again. What distribution did LHO start with? Now play the diamond King and LHO drops a suspicious D10. Holding two 7 card side suits namely diamonds and hearts, can I count on my unsupportive opponents not to be 3-3 in either red suit? There is still hope – if LHO is forced to lead spades again, you can make your 9th trick. You're now at an inflection point. Can I count on you? So you lead a club, and LHO wins the ace and returns a club to the board's bare King on which RHO plays the Club 10. You return to hand with the Diamond Ace and west shows out. You next lead a heart to dummy's HK and return to hand with the heart ace as West throws the SJ! Undeterred, you exit with the club 8 and watch as west cashes three more clubs before leading a spade into your AQ, 3NT making.

The screenshot shows a bridge game interface with the following details:

- Lead:** A diamond card with the number 4.
- North (Robot):** ♠ 1086, ♥ K9876, ♦ 875, ♣ KJ
- West (Robot):** ♠ KJ972, ♥ 2, ♦ 104, ♣ AQ965
- East (Robot):** ♠ 54, ♥ QJ1054, ♦ Q932, ♣ 102
- South (Jakenow):** ♠ AQ3, ♥ A3, ♦ AKJ6, ♣ 8743
- Bidding:**
 - West: 1♠
 - North: Pass
 - East: Pass
 - South: 2♥
 - West: Pass
 - North: Pass
 - East: 2NT
 - South: Pass
 - West: Pass
 - North: 3NT
 - East: Pass
 - South: Pass
- Score:** 0-0, 3NT South.

I knew I could count on you! But don't tell Andy!