

This hand was played 5 times in Spades and 4 times in No Trump. Everyone in Spades made their contract while only 2 NT contracts succeeded.

Before we start let us examine why **Spades is the optimum suit contract**. East can see in either S's or D's there are only four losers: 2 spades, 1 heart and 1 club. In spades they only need 1 trick from partner to make game *but in diamonds declarer needs 2 tricks from partner*.

With Spades as trumps, the most frequent lead was a club. This creates entry to dummy problems as the CA is the only guaranteed entry. Before playing, work out a plan. For those in game, where are ten tricks coming from? 1C, 5D, 1 possible H trick and hopefully 3 Spades.

First scenario: the plan should be to win the club ace and play a heart immediately. Otherwise you are depending on the opponents to open that suit — this is highly unlikely as they will play clubs at every opportunity, to reduce your trumps. (*There is no guarantee the QS is an entry to dummy*)

JH is best. Whether North covers or not, declarer is guaranteed a H trick on the lay out below. When South wins AH, best defence is to return a club. After ruffing in hand, play a Spade towards the Q. If South goes up with the KS (would you?) and returns another C, declarer has no choice now but to play on D's hoping that the defender with longer Spades will ruff. South ruffs the DQ and returns a C, ruffed in hand. Declarer now plays 10S to QS and returns to hand with a H. Draws the last trump with the AS. The remaining 2 D's bring the game home.

2nd scenario: Win the AC, cross to D, small S to Queen. This time South ducks. Spade back to Ace, the JS falls from North. Declarer now knows that South holds 4 Spades to the K and must cease playing trumps and start to cash D's. South ruffs the QD, cashes the KS and returns a club which East ruffs. **Now East can't establish a H trick as there is no entry to dummy.**

5 Diamonds is an easier contract to play with the advantage of ruffing Spades in the short hand but in pairs a Spade game will score higher.

3NT is defeated on a heart lead once South finds the Club switch.

Dlr: South
Vul: None

♠ J 6

♥ Q 7 6 3 2

♦ 6 3 2

♣ K J 9

Optimum
EW 4S
-420

♠ Q 2

♥ J 9 8 4

♦ 8 5 4

♣ A 8 4 2

WEST
NORTH
EAST

11

WEST
SOUTH
EAST

♠ A 10 8 7 5

♥ K 10

♦ A K Q 9 7

♣ 5

7
16

7
10

♠ K 9 4 3

♥ A 5

♦ J 10

♣ Q 10 7 6 3

♣♦♥♠N

N	1	-	-	-	-
S	1	-	-	-	-
E	-	5	1	4	2
W	-	5	1	4	2

Board No 11 None Vul Dealer South								
EW	Bid	By	Ld	Tks	+Sc	-Sc	+	-
16	2♠	E	♣3	+1		140	10	6
14	3NT	W	♥3	-1	50		15	1
12	2♠	E	♦J	+1		140	10	6
10	4♠	E	♣3	+1		450	0	16
18	2NT	W	♥3	+1		150	6	10
13	3NT	W	♥3	+1		430	2	14
11	2♠	E	♥A	+2		170	4	12
2	3NT	W	♥3	-1	50		15	1
19	3♠	E	♣6	=		140	10	6