

Find the best line of play

Some deals are easy to play. Unfortunately, most are not.
If you can learn the best way to size up the hand BEFORE starting to play,
you will find yourself making more contracts than you ever did.

Contract: 4S

Lead: C jack

North
S Q J 10
H J 2
D K Q J 5 3
C K 3 2

South
S K 9 8 7 2
H K Q 3
D 6 2
C A 5 4

South	North
1S	2D
2NT	4S
Pass	

How will you play?

Please decide before reading on

Answer to how will you play?

Contract: 4S

Lead: C Jack

North

S Q J 10

H J 2

D K Q J 5 3

C K 3 2

South

S K 9 8 7 2

H K Q 3

D 6 2

C A 5 4

You can't avoid losing three aces, so you must avoid your club loser.

Before starting to play, to have a chance to play this deal correctly, you must first answer these two important questions:

1. What suit will you lead at trick 2?
2. Where should you win the opening lead?

Essential hint: Question #2 must not be addressed until you answer question #1.

Answer to question #1: What suit will you lead at trick 2?

You must avoid losing a club, so leading a trump at trick 2 is 100% wrong. An opponent will win his ace and lead another club. It will now be impossible to avoid losing a trick in each suit.

Leading a diamond at trick 2 is a better plan. Dummy's diamond suit is long and strong and offers a chance to avoid losing a club trick. However, when you knock out the D ace, E-W will persist with clubs. You'll then need to discard your last club on dummy's 3rd diamond honor without anyone ruffing. For this to work, you need diamonds to divide 3-3, which is against the odds.

In fact, the correct suit to lead at trick 2 is hearts. The combined N-S heart holding is not as imposing as the diamonds, but your side's hearts include the same three honors as in diamonds. And since E-W have 8 hearts, neither opponent is likely to be able to ruff one of your winners. Sometimes, less is more.

Answer to question #2: Where should you win the opening lead?

You now know to lead hearts at trick 2. Your hand has the heart length, so you must preserve the only fast entry to your hand (C ace). Therefore, at trick 1, you must win the C king. At trick 2, you'll apply: "Use up the honor from the short side first," and lead the H jack, and E-W are now helpless.

Here is the full deal:

North

S Q J 10

H J 2

D K Q J 5 3

C K 3 2

West

S A 5

H 10 7 6 5 4

D 9 7

C J 10 9 6

East

S 6 4 3

H A 9 8

D A 10 8 4

C Q 8 7

South

S K 9 8 7 2

H K Q 3

D 6 2

C A 5 4