

Defend Three Clubs -- Problem

North Deals
Both Vul

♠ A Q
♥ 5 4
♦ K 10 7 6
♣ A 8 7 4 3



♠ K 10 5 4 2
♥ A K 7
♦ 8 5 4 3
♣ 6

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1 ♦	1 ♠	Pass
1 NT	Pass	Pass	2 ♣
2 ♠	3 ♣	All pass	
3 ♣ by South			
Lead: ♥ 10 ¹			

1. Rusinow, shows the Jack or shortness.

Join me as East for this deal from an online matchpoint pairs game. Declarer has the ♥ Q, and ♠ Q will be parked on it. Desperate times call for desperate measures: we win the ♥ K and shift to the ♦ 4 (third best from even) into the teeth of dummy's tenace.

Partner rises with the ♦ A and duly shifts to the ♠ 3, ♠ Q, ♠ K, ♠ 8. We are in. What next?

North Deals
Both Vul

Defend Three Clubs -- Solution

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

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We must cash the ♥ A or our trick will disappear on the ♠ J. I fell from grace by returning a spade -- we got 22% for letting them make four, compared to 46% for holding them to three. Other pairs scored better by declaring a major suit our way, usually taking eight tricks, and never doubled.

During the early stages of play, partner and I prioritize count. At trick two, my ♦ 4 was a careful lead, in case the count became necessary. Likewise partner's ♠ 3 (lowest from odd, in our methods) was the correct count card.

Late in the hand, a low lead asks for the return of the suit, and a high lead asks for a shift. Late in the hand came early on this deal -- the count no longer mattered at trick three. Partner could have helped me out by leading the ♠ 7 -- build a fence around partner, when you can. Still, I should have been able to figure this out -- did you?