

# Lebensohl -- Problem

**Board 15**  
South Deals  
N-S Vul



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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
Pass	1 NT	2 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	?

1. When asked, West said, "diamonds and a higher suit." DONT? Yes.

Join me as South for this deal in a club matchpoint pairs game.

Playing old-fashioned standard bidding, a bid at the 2-level is to play, so we would not bid 2 ♠. 2 NT would be the only invitational bid. A new suit at the 3-level would be forcing, and 3 ♦ would be game-forcing Stayman, and 3 NT would be to play. All of these bids assume that, if a stopper in the known suit is needed, partner has it. What should we do here, with these methods?

We have better methods -- we play lebensohl. Everything is standard, with these exceptions: 3 ♦ (Stayman) and 3 NT deny a stopper in diamonds. 2 NT is no longer invitational; it asks opener to bid 3 ♣. We can then pass 3 ♣, if we only wanted to compete in clubs, bid 3 ♦ (Stayman) or 3 NT (both promising a diamond stopper), or bid an invitational 3 ♥ or 3 ♠. This plan is known as "slow action shows stopper (SASS)" or more succinctly, "fast denies." What should we do here, with these methods?

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Lebensohl -- Solution

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



West	North	East	South
	<i>Al</i>		<i>Pete</i>
Pass	1 NT	2 ♦ <sup>1</sup>	Pass
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	3 ♠

1. When asked, West said, "diamonds and a higher suit." DONT? Yes.  
4 ♠ by South  
Lead: ♦ J

Lebensohl only helps in that, if we bid 3 ♦ or 3 ♠, partner knows we do not have a spade stopper. These are the only reasonable bids. I picked wrong. I figured East's higher suit was probably hearts, so I gave up on that suit. If it turned out to be spades, at least my cards would be well-located. If we do have a heart fit, it won't play well if they split 4-1 either way. So I bid 3 ♠, and partner duly raised to game. Three rounds of diamonds promoted a trump trick for West. Making four was a horrible score for us.

North easily makes six spades: win the likely ♥ 10 lead, draw trump in two rounds. Take the club finesse and ruff the king out, using the hearts and ruffs for transportation. Discard a diamond on the ♣ J, and eventually ruff two diamonds on dummy.

Not until well after the session, preparing to write up the deal, did I learn that East had no higher suit, only diamonds. If they were playing DONT and East misbid, then I have no recourse -- I was correctly told their agreements. However, *if they were not playing DONT, we were injured, and we deserved an adjusted score.* (Neither of them remarked on the matter after the play -- nor did West alert or save in hearts.)

Against a known 1-suiter, I would surely have chosen 3 ♦, to locate either 4-card major in partner's hand. North declares in either major they have, and we make 6 ♠ as well. Perhaps I should have taken right-siding the contract into account, but 3 ♠ was reasonable. It's what I would have done holding

♠ A J 7 3 2 ♥ 8 7 6 ♦ 9 3 ♣ A Q 3

Al pointed out that transfer lebensohl would have solved the problem of my wrong-siding the hand by bidding 3 ♠: I would instead jump to 3 ♥, showing five or more spades in an invitational or better hand. Larry Cohen writes about lebensohl and transfer lebensohl at <https://www.larryco.com/bridge-learning-center/print/775>. Since this is the first time I have found a need for transfer lebensohl, I'm in no hurry to take it up.