

The following hand in 3NT seems to offer a number of choices.

A small Hrt is led and you win with the Q at trick 1.

You have 8 "top tricks"; can you identify where a 9th trick *might* come from ?

{declarer}	{dummy}
Axx	Kxxx
QJx	xx
xxx	AKxxx
AKQx	xx

a) the diamonds may "break " { 3-2 }

b) the spades may "break" {3-3 }

a) -you might play A + K diamonds and a third diamond; the remaining diamonds could well be winners. { YES you will have to lose the lead}

b)-you might play A + K spades and a third spade; the remaining spades could be winners. { YES you will have to lose the lead}

Which is best ? Without going into probability theory too much we can say that as a rule of thumb the more cards you have in a suit the better the chance that it will "break" and thus provide extra tricks.

The correct line is to :

1) win the Hrt ; 2) play Ace diamonds; 3) play K diamonds; 4) play a small diamond....

now a number of things might happen ! The opponents have taken the lead and they may be able to run a number of Hrt tricks which might beat our contract; OR the opponents might cash Hrt tricks but not have enough Hrts to beat us. Or ... { and there are more possibilities but let us just point out that losing the lead does not necessarily spell doom }.

One last hand -again 3NT on the 2 Hrt lead.

{Try to identify from the start *i*)where extra tricks might come from + *ii*) estimate the risk (or the chances)in taking one line or the other }

{declarer}	{dummy}
AQx	xxx
Kxx	xxx
xxx	AKxxx
AKQJ	xx

we have the ubiquitous 8 tricks

the choices are :

1) a spade finesse { 50% for those who like their chances in quantifiable measures}

2) a diamond break { ie diamonds are 3-2 ...a 68% chance}

The correct play is to win the Hrt lead and play the diamonds from the top