

Play hands -- making the most of what you've got ...

You are in 3NT and after an initial count of your top-tricks you realise that you only have six certain tricks. Something like this....

(declarer)	(dummy)	
AQ3	K76	3 x spade tricks
AJ2	1094	1 x heart trick
10943	AJ32	1x diamond trick
A43	Q87	1x club trick

With only six tricks you will probably need some luck anyway but you should still start with a definite plan. You must look at each suit in turn and decide the best way to play the suit to get the most tricks from it.

This is the sort of thinking you must go through :-

Spades ? AQ3-----K76 There is no difficulty playing this suit -3 tricks are certain.

Hearts? AJ2 -----1094 There are finesse possibilities here- the 10 can be led for the first of a series of finesses. {The 10 might lose BUT later the finesse can be repeated. }
This *double finesse* will help to make 2 tricks in the Hrt suit ie the Ace + the Jack

Diamonds? 10943-----AJ32 Again there are finesse possibilities here. This is also of a *double finesse /running finesse* type.
The 10 is led and "run". Probably the finesse will lose.
Later the 9 can be led - it is quite likely that this second finesse in the suit will win.
The finesses, if things go according to plan ,will net in total 3 tricks in diamonds ie the Ace + the Jack + the 9

Clubs ? A43 -----Q87 This holding is not really a finesse type although it is given the sobriquet *Chinese finesse*.
The Ace is led and then a small card is led to the Queen.
Depending on where the King is , the Queen may become a trick. The clubs can thus {if things go our way} make two tricks ie the Ace + the Queen.

So all that remains is to put our plans into action !!!

NB we are hoping to take 3 spade tricks + 3 diamond tricks + 2 Heart tricks +2 Club tricks. {that would be 10 tricks -not bad for a hand that first only offered just 6 tricks.} Of course only 9 tricks are needed and it will take time to make those tricks. Every time we lose the lead the opponents will be busily building tricks for themselves. In practise we are unlikely to have the time to make 10 tricks. We do best to concentrate on the suit(s) that will give us the most tricks.

Over the page we are going to play the hand out in full.