

# Defending No Trump Contracts – Overtaking and Unblocking

## Unblocking

- Partner leads an honour against a no trump contract.
- Third seat has a doubleton honour.
- **Play the honour.**
  
- Partner leads a low card against a no trump contract.
- Third seat has a doubleton honour.
- **Play the honour.**

### Examples

After partner's 3♠ bid, the opponents end up in 3NT. Partner leads JS and dummy has a singleton ace.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ J	♠ A	♠ Q 6

Play the queen.

	North	
	♠ A	
	♥ 9 7 6 5	
	♦ A T 4 2	
	♣ 9 8 3 2	
West		East
♠ J T 9 7 4 3 2		♠ Q 6
♥ A K		♥ 8 4 3 2
♦ 8 6 5		♦ 9 7
♣ 6		♣ A T
	South	
	♠ K 8 5	
	♥ Q J T	
	♦ K Q J 3	
	♣ A K 5	

West	North	East	South
3♠	Pass	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

Declarer has eight top tricks and will need to establish a heart for the ninth. On winning the first trick, declarer will lead a heart and west will win the trick. West will play another spade.

If east did not play the queen at trick one, declarer will duck and the queen will win trick three. West has no spades left and will be unable to continue the suit.

When west wins the second heart trick, declarer will still have a spade stopper and will make the contract.

If east unblocks at trick one by playing the queen, it does not help declarer to duck the second spade as **west** will be on lead. West can play another spade and the king will be forced out. West's second heart winner will be the entry for the remaining spade tricks.

Defending 3NT, partner leads a small heart.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♥ 5	♥ Q 6	♥ J 3

Play the jack.

		North		
		♠ K Q J 7 2		
		♥ Q 6		
		♦ J T 5		
		♣ A 6 5		
West		East		
♠ 8 5 4		♠ A 9 6		
♥ A T 7 5 4 2		♥ J 3		
♦ 6 4 3		♦ K Q 7		
♣ 2		♣ T 9 8 4 3		
		South		
		♠ T 3		
		♥ K 9 8		
		♦ A 9 8 2		
		♣ K Q J 7		

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

If declarer plays a low heart from dummy and allows east to win the trick, the contract will be safe. Declarer still has a heart stopper and east will have no hearts left when winning the ♠A. Fortunately, declarers sometimes make mistakes and the defence needs to capitalise on them.

Assume the ♥Q is played from dummy at trick one.

If east plays low, declarer will start on the spades. East will win the ace and play the ♥J - but now declarer can duck. East has no more hearts to lead and the contract is safe. If west overtakes east's jack with the ace, then declarer still has the king as a stopper.

If east unblocks at trick one by playing the jack, declarer is doomed. On winning the ♠A, east plays the ♥3. No matter what declarer does, west will take five heart tricks.

## Overtaking

Partner leads the queen of spades against 3NT.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ Q	♠ 7 4 3	♠ K 2

Play the king.

		Dummy		
		♠ 7 4 <u>3</u>		
West		East		
♠ <u>Q</u> J T 9 5		♠ <u>K</u> 2		
		South		
		♠ A 8 <u>6</u>		

If you play low, declarer will duck and duck the second spade too.

Now you can't continue the suit.

		Dummy		
		♠ 7 4 <u>3</u>		
West		East		
♠ <u>Q</u> J T 9 5		♠ <u>K</u> 2		
		South		
		♠ A 8 <u>6</u>		

If you play the king and declarer ducks, you can lead the two.

If declarer ducks again, west can continue the suit.

## Overtaking with Length

After you opened 1S, they ended up in 3NT. Partner leads the jack of spades.

This must be a singleton or a doubleton. Partner would lead low with three to an honour.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ J	♠ 8 6 3	♠ K Q T 9 5

Overtake but play the queen. Lower of equals.

Dummy		
West	♠ 8 6 <u>3</u>	East
♠ <u>J</u>	South	♠ K <u>Q</u> T 9 5
	♠ A 7 4 2	

If you play a low card, partner will not be able to continue the suit.

## When not to Overtake

Partner leads the queen of spades against 3NT.

The Lead is	Dummy has	Third Seat has
♠ Q	♠ T 6 4	♠ K 3

Play the three.

Dummy		
West	♠ T 6 <u>4</u>	East
♠ <u>Q</u> J 9 7 2	South	♠ K <u>3</u>
	♠ A 8 5	

Dummy's ♠T changes everything. If you overtake, you may set up the ♠T as an extra trick for declarer.

Dummy		
West	♠ T 6 <u>4</u>	East
♠ A <u>Q</u> J 5 2	South	♠ K <u>3</u>
	♠ 9 8 7	

If this is the layout, you will have to hope that partner continues with the ace.

## Deal 1

	North	
	♠ K Q T ♥ A Q 8 ♦ K Q J 5 ♣ 9 8 2	
West		East
♠ A ♥ K T 9 7 3 2 ♦ A 7 ♣ J T 7 5		♠ 8 6 5 3 2 ♥ J ♦ 9 8 6 4 ♣ 6 4 3
	South	
	♠ J 9 7 4 ♥ 6 5 4 ♦ T 3 2 ♣ A K Q	

West	North	East	South
1♥	1NT	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

East leads ♥J. With such a bad hand, it has to be partner's suit.

West realises that north must have both the ace and queen of hearts. These must be forced out but luckily, west has two aces as entries.

West must overtake the jack with the king at trick one. Otherwise, declarer will duck and east will be unable to continue the suit.

## Deal 2

	North	
	♠ K 9 ♥ K 4 3 ♦ T 7 4 ♣ T 5 4 3 2	
West		East
♠ 7 ♥ A J 9 8 ♦ Q J 9 3 ♣ K J 8 6		♠ A 6 4 3 ♥ T 7 2 ♦ K 8 6 ♣ A Q 9
	South	
	♠ Q J T 8 5 2 ♥ Q 6 5 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ 7	

West	North	East	South
Dble	Pass	3NT	2♠ All Pass

South leads ♠Q, top of a sequence. If north plays the nine, declarer will play low. When north continues with the king, declarer will duck again.

Now, north has no more spades and must switch to another suit.

When on lead, declarer will set about establishing diamond tricks. South can take the ace and lead another spade but declarer will take the ace. That, along with a heart, three diamonds and four club tricks is enough for the contract.

At trick one, it is better if north plays the king. When declarer ducks, north can continue with the nine. If declarer ducks again, south can overtake with the ten and continue with the spades. East will win with the ace. Eventually, south will regain the lead with the ace of diamonds and take the rest of the spade tricks to defeat the contract.

## Deal 3

	North	
	♠ A K 6 2 ♥ 4 2 ♦ A 8 6 5 4 3 ♣ J	
West		East
♠ Q 9 5 ♥ J 9 7 ♦ T ♣ A K 9 7 4 2		♠ T 8 3 ♥ Q T 8 5 3 ♦ Q J 7 ♣ T 8
	South	
	♠ J 7 4 ♥ A K 6 ♦ K 9 2 ♣ Q 6 5 3	

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
	1♦	Pass	3NT
Pass	Pass	Pass	

West leads the ♣7, fourth highest and the singleton jack is played from dummy. Using the doubleton honour rule, east plays the ten.

Now, declarer plays the ♦3 from dummy. East must be alert and play the ♦J, to guarantee a diamond entry.

Eventually, east will win a diamond trick and play the ♣8 through declarer's queen to beat the contract. Note that if east had the ♣T at this point, declarer could play low. East would then be unable to continue clubs.

It is also important to note east's play at trick two. If east plays a low diamond, declarer allows west to win the trick. If west now plays clubs, south's queen will become a stopper.

## Deal 4

	North	
	♠ 7 3 ♥ 9 8 7 5 ♦ A 9 8 ♣ T 9 6 5	
West		East
♠ Q T 9 ♥ K Q 2 ♦ Q J T 5 ♣ K 3 2		♠ 6 5 4 ♥ A 6 3 ♦ K 7 2 ♣ A Q 8 4
	South	
	♠ A K J 8 2 ♥ J T 4 ♦ 6 4 3 ♣ J 7	

<b>West</b>	<b>North</b>	<b>East</b>	<b>South</b>
		1♣	1♠
3NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

North leads partner's suit, the ♠7, the higher card of a doubleton.

Dummy goes down and south stops to think.

Declarer surely must have three or four spades to the queen for the 3NT bid. Partner has a very poor hand with at most four or five HCP.

To beat the contract, north will need two spades and an entry – most likely the ace of diamonds. Assume it is so. On the opening lead, south plays an encouraging card and west wins with the nine. When declarer starts on diamonds, north can take the ace and return the three of spades. South will cash four spade tricks and the contract is down.

## Moment of Madness

The Grand National Pairs (GNP) was an event for players below the rank of life master. Kate and I were fortunate enough to play in the final four times and we were very sorry when the event was discontinued.

This deal occurred early in the first session of the last GNP event in 2012.

<b>Board 7</b>	♠ J743	
<i>Dealer S</i>	♥ AJT7532	
<i>Vul Both</i>	♦ 7	
	♣ A	
♠ KQ5		♠ AT62
♥ Q64		♥ 98
♦ T964		♦ Q852
♣ 984		♣ T75
		♠ 98
		♥ K
		♦ AKJ3
		♣ KQJ632

Kate and I were sitting North-South. After looking for a fairly optimistic slam, I (North) ended up in 5♥. East led a low diamond. Dummy went down and I breathed a sigh of relief that it wasn't a spade lead.

No doubt, any sane person would win the lead in dummy and play to North's A♣. Then, back to dummy's K♥ and discard spade losers on the K♦ and top clubs.

Not me!

After winning the A♦, I cashed the K♥ and then the K♦ discarding the A♣ from my hand. This brought a few raised eyebrows – especially from the South seat!

Having unblocked the clubs, I played K, Q and J discarding three spades. When the clubs broke kindly, I played a fourth club discarding the last spade from my hand. West discarded a diamond and East ruffed. With only hearts left, I lost just one more trick, the Q♥.

So, eleven tricks were made. It certainly wasn't the best way but it was fun!

Chris