

**THINKING BRIDGE - - By Eddie Kantar**  
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Dir: South Vul: None	NORTH ♠ Q42 ♥ 653 ♦ AQ1096 ♣ K6		West	North	East	South
			--	--	--	1 NT
			Pass	3 NT	All Pass	
WEST ♠ J108 ♥ Q82 ♦ 54 ♣ J9432		EAST ♠ K9753 ♥ J1094 ♦ K7 ♣ Q10	Opening Lead = ♠J. Plan the play			
	SOUTH ♠ A6 ♥ AK7 ♦ J832 ♣ A875					

**Solution:**

This deal is supposed to be a “**confidence builder**.” To receive an “A,” all you have to do is play low from dummy and preserve the queen as a stopper in case East gets the lead. The diamond finesse is going into East, so that seems to be a clever idea.

After the winning the ♠A, run the ♦8 (or the ♦J). The finesse loses, but East cannot attack spades without surrendering a trick to dummy’s queen. In the meantime, you now have nine tricks: four diamonds, two hearts, two clubs and one spade. Playing the ♠Q at trick one is an optical illusion. If West has led from the king, you can always take a second spade trick later. If East has the king, your now-guarded queen protects you from a further spade attack.

**The bottom line**

Defensively, when the bidding goes 1NT-pass 3NT, it is healthier to lead a major suit as opposed to a minor. If dummy had one or two four-card majors, 2♣ would have been the original response. In the absence of a 2♣ response, expect minor-suit length to hit the table.

When the opponents lead a jack against your notrump contract, find out if they are using the lead convention “jack denies.” If they are, the jack is the opening leader’s highest card and there is not much point in playing the queen from dummy.

With A-x facing Q-x-x in the dummy, it is usually right to win the opening lead with the ace, particularly if you plan to take a finesse into your right-hand opponent. However, if you absolutely need two quick tricks in the suit, play the queen.