

THINKING BRIDGE (9)

Eddie Kantar Fall 2016 Orlando, Florida

Dlr: South	♠ 7 6
Vul: Both	♥ K J 8
	♦ K J 5 4
	♣ K J 5 2
	♠ A 10
	♥ Q 10 9
	♦ A 9 3 2
	♣ A Q 8 3

With both sides vulnerable, you open 1NT in first seat. West overcalls 3♣ and partner bids 3NT. You and partner are playing negative doubles after a three-level overcall. A double here would have shown four hearts. In any case, it is unlikely that West has solid spades. As West, with a solid suit to lead against a notrump contract, one usually passes. However, if the opponents aren't about to play the contract in notrump, now you can compete in your suit. West leads the ♠K. **Plan the play**:-

Start by winning the second spade. West should have seven spades for his vulnerable three-level overcall of a strong 1NT. Now what? You have five black-suit tricks and two sure diamond tricks so you need two more. If you knew for sure that East had the ♥A, you could just drive out that card. But it is far from clear that East has the ♥A. Besides, if East has the ♥A, you are always going to make this contract. You should be thinking about diamonds in case West has the ♥A.

If West has the ♥A, you are going to need four diamond tricks to get to nine tricks. The best play for four diamond tricks is to begin by leading a low diamond, intending to finesse the jack. Why is this better than leading the ace first? Because by leading low you guard against a singleton queen in the West hand, a holding that allows you to take four tricks in the suit via an eventual finesse of the ♦9. If East has the singleton queen and West the 10-8-7-6, you can take three only diamond tricks no matter how you play the suit.

If the diamond finesse loses and West has the ♥A, well, it's just too unpleasant to discuss. By the way, it can't hurt to cash four club tricks before leading a diamond.

Notice that with all the high-card points between your hand and dummy (28), East-West with 12 HCP can take eight tricks at a spade contract. That's the power of distribution. **The full deal**:

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