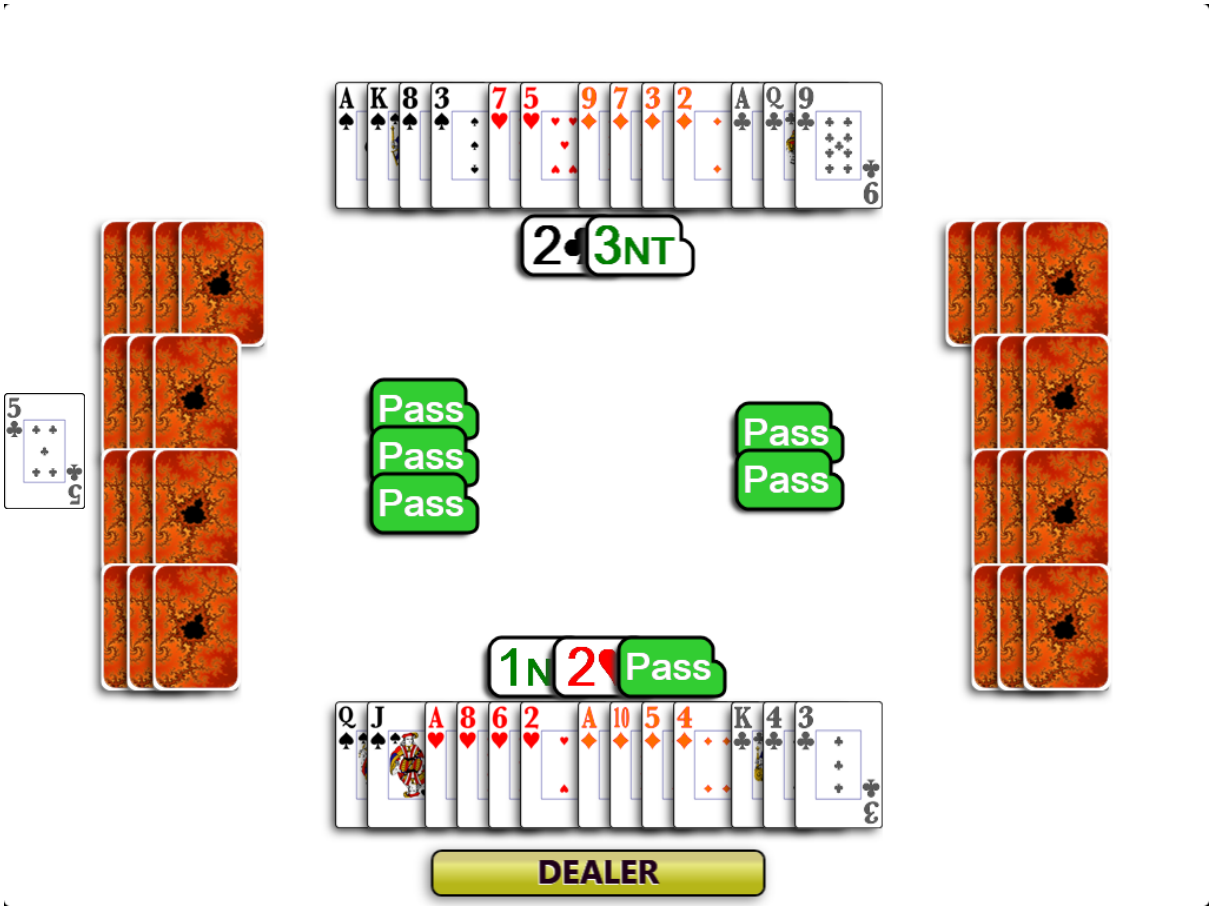
REVISION EXERCISE 4

Dealer is south and ends up in 3NT with the bidding as shown:



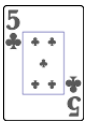
Note on the bidding:

Opening 1NT is standard on this hand.

Responder has enough for game but starts with Stayman (2♣) looking for a possible spade fit.

Opener shows hearts (2♥).

Not having four hearts, responder bids game in 3NT.

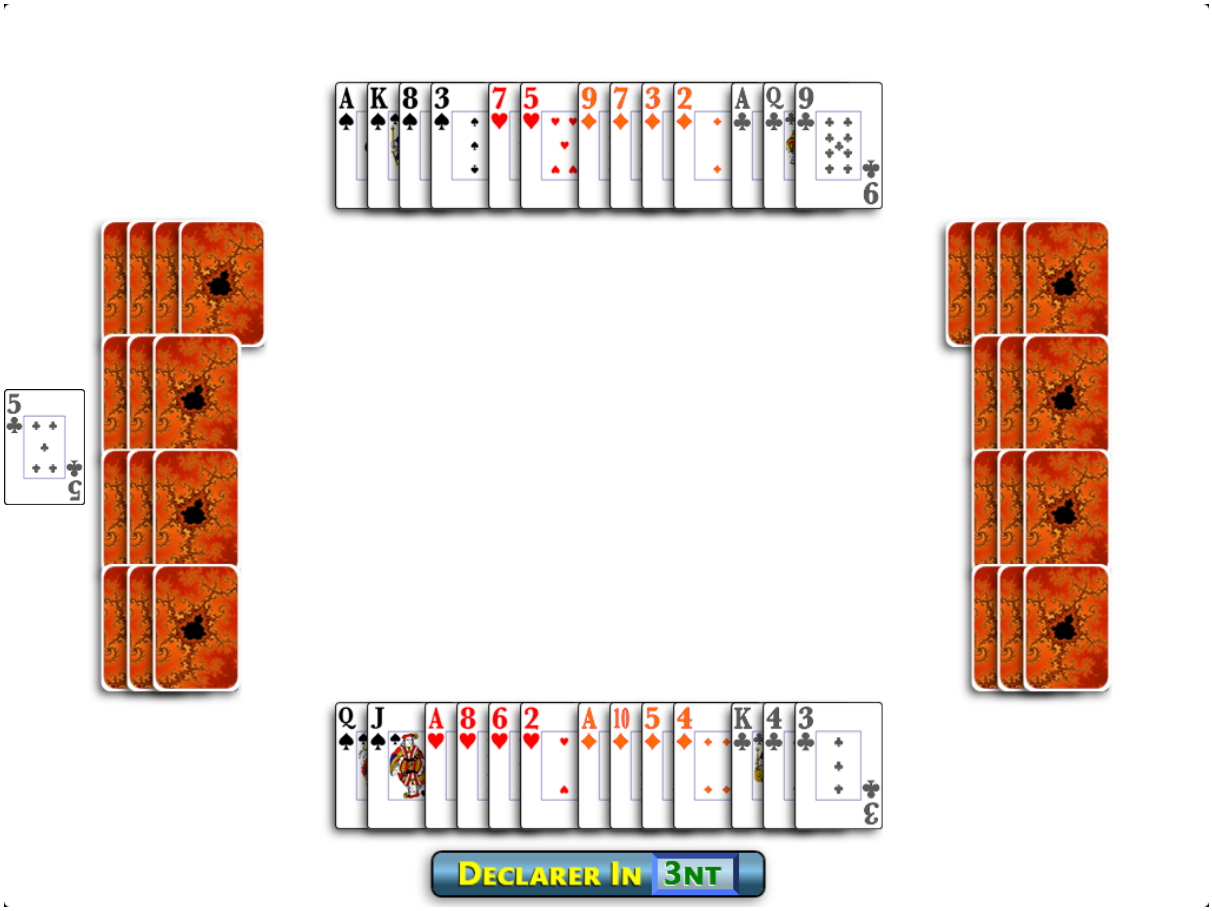
The lead is: 

Will you make your contract?

Give reasons for your decision.

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED.

You will make your contract.



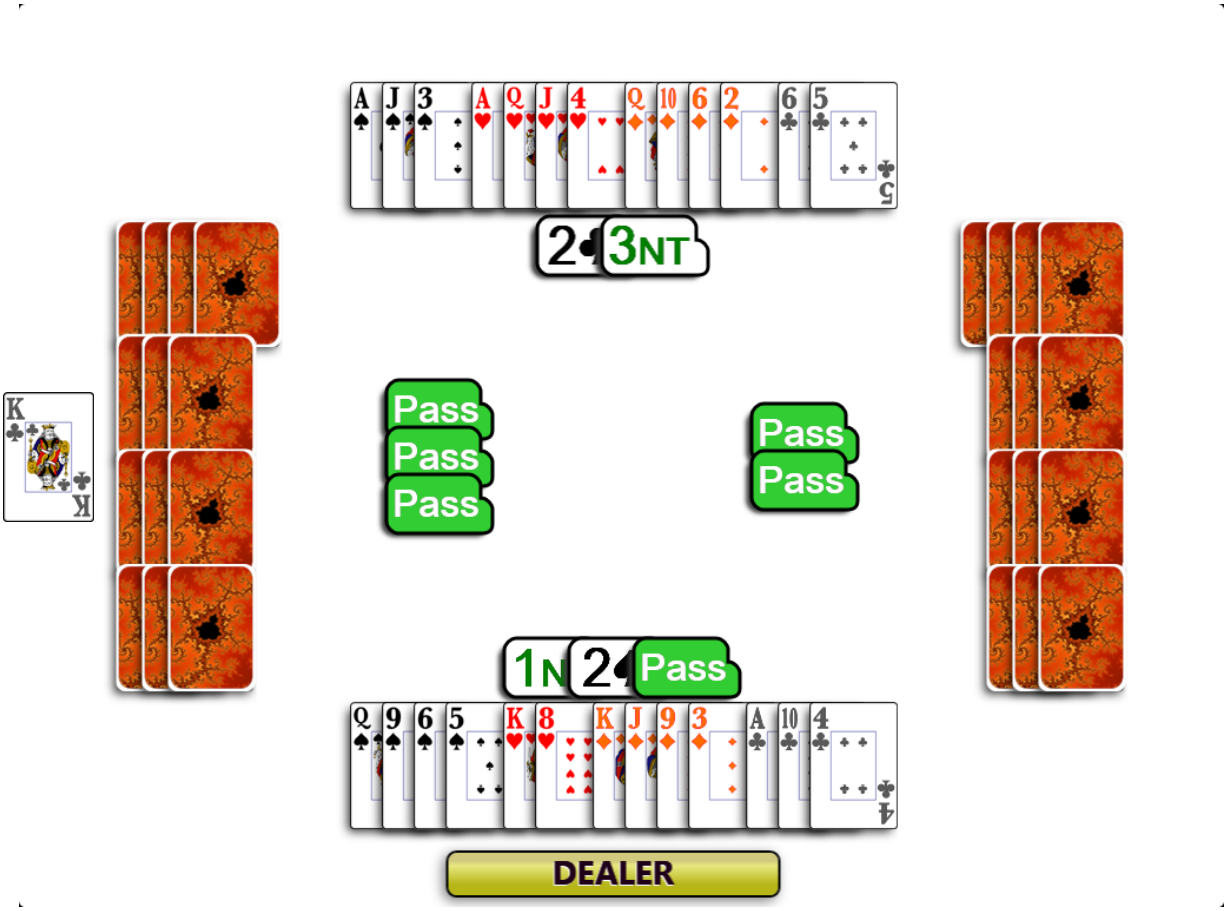
You make 3NT

It should be clear that you have 4 spade tricks, 1 heart, 1 diamond and 3 clubs. The hand is unusual in that you can take all 9 tricks immediately without losing the lead.

Generally, losing tricks in a controlled way would be essential to making a 3NT contract.

Planning the play of the whole hand is crucial as we will see in the following example.

Dealer is south and ends up in 3NT with the bidding as shown:



Note on the bidding:

Opening 1NT is standard on this hand.

Responder has enough for game but starts with Stayman (2♣) looking for a possible heart fit.

Opener shows spades (2♠).

Not having four spades, responder bids game in 3NT.

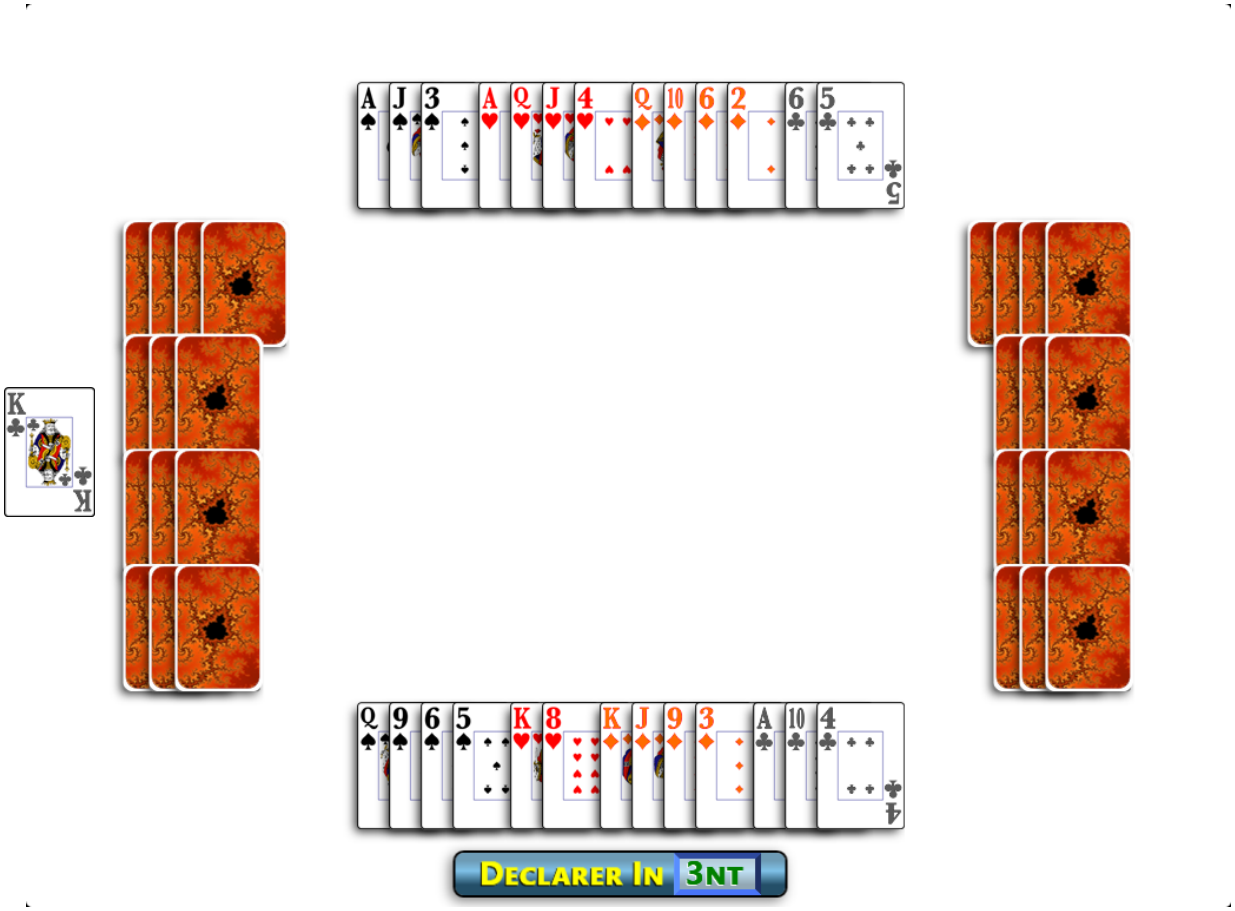
The lead is: 

Will you make your contract?

Give reasons for your decision.

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED.

You may or may not make your contract



Analysis

The lead

The ♣K will be top of a solid sequence from K, Q, J (we have the 10). The lead does not indicate how many clubs west has but the expectation is four or more.

If west has four clubs

The opponents will take 3 club tricks. Your priority is to establish diamonds by losing to the ace, after which you have 3 diamond winners. 4 heart winners plus the ♠A makes 9 winners plus and extra spade if the finesse succeeds.

But west may have 5 or more clubs, so the play becomes less certain.

If west has five clubs

Immediately we see east has three clubs. The location of the ♦A is all-important as we must lose to it if we are to succeed ourselves. If west has the ♦A, we will lose to this ace plus 4 club tricks, so we fail the contract. If east has the ace, things are very different. The question is: when do we play our ♣A? As finding the ♦A with west always leads to failure, we need to consider what is different if the ♦A is with east.

If we play our ♣A immediately, east will have two more clubs left and will shortly win with the ♦A (we must set up our diamond winners). A club will be returned and we will fail.

If we play our ace on the second round of clubs, east will have one club left and return it, so again we fail.

If we wait till the third round where we have no choice but to play the ♣A, east will have no clubs left to return. East is welcome to win with the ♦A but it is all over. We will make our contract.

This illustrates one of the most important aspects of card play, especially in no-trumps, that of breaking the communication between the opponents. Demonstrated here are two of the common problems with card play:

1. Fear of losing the lead and thereby guaranteeing failure.
2. Understanding that tricks have to be lost to keep control and enhance the chances of success.

Losing the lead is NOT the same as losing control.

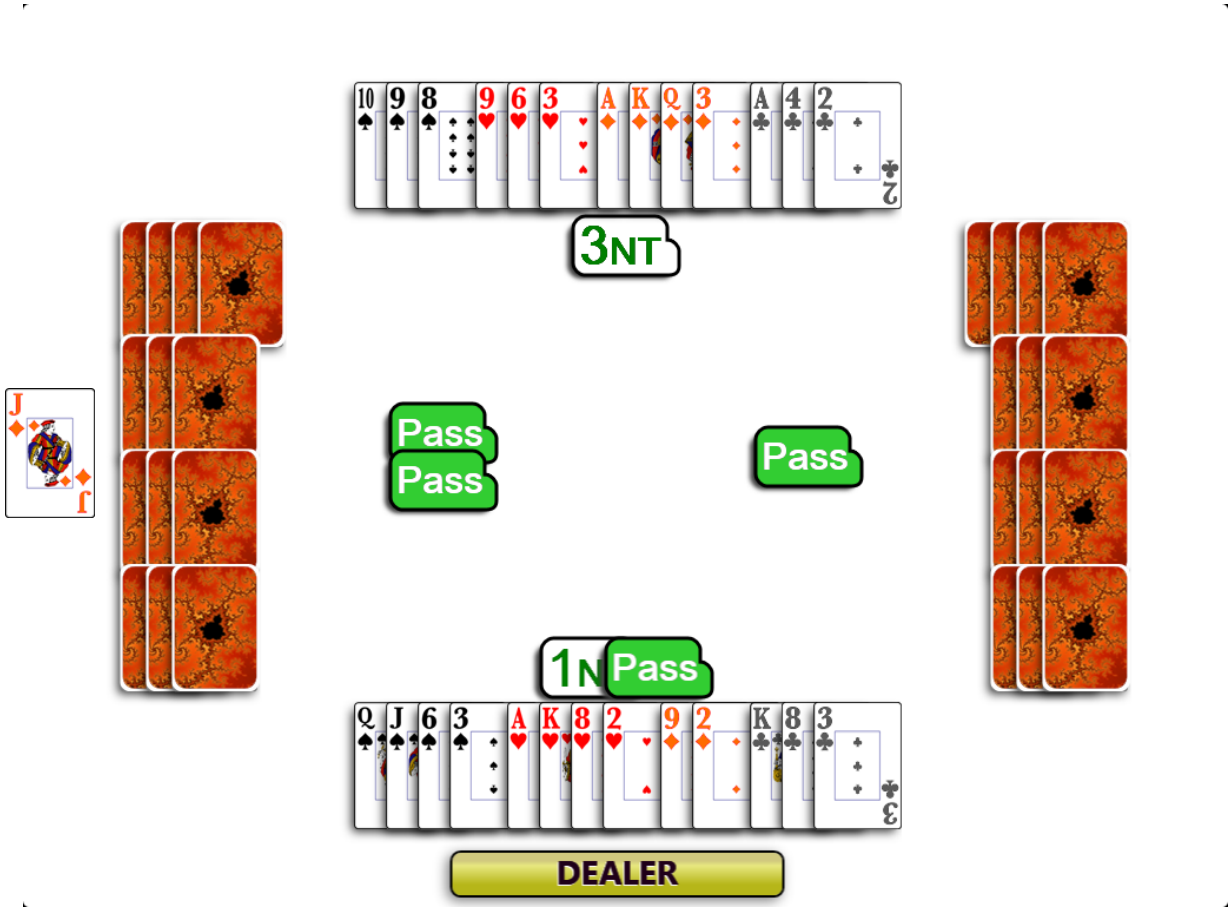
So do we make the contract?

We succeed whenever west started with four clubs and whenever the ♦A is with east.

For those statistically-minded, the probability of a 4–4 break is very close to one-third, in which case your contract succeeds. Of the remaining two-thirds, (west had 5+ clubs) the chances of the ♦A being with either east or west is evens, so half of two-thirds is another one-third. Combining both these gives the overall chance of success at about two-thirds **PROVIDED** the play of the ♣A is delayed to the third round.

For those not statistically-minded, the probability of success is still about two-thirds. And you still hold up the ♣A to the third round.

Dealer is south and ends up in 3NT with the bidding as shown:



Note on the bidding:

With 13 HCPs in both (balanced) hands with no major suit fit, the contract ends up in 3NT.

The lead is: 

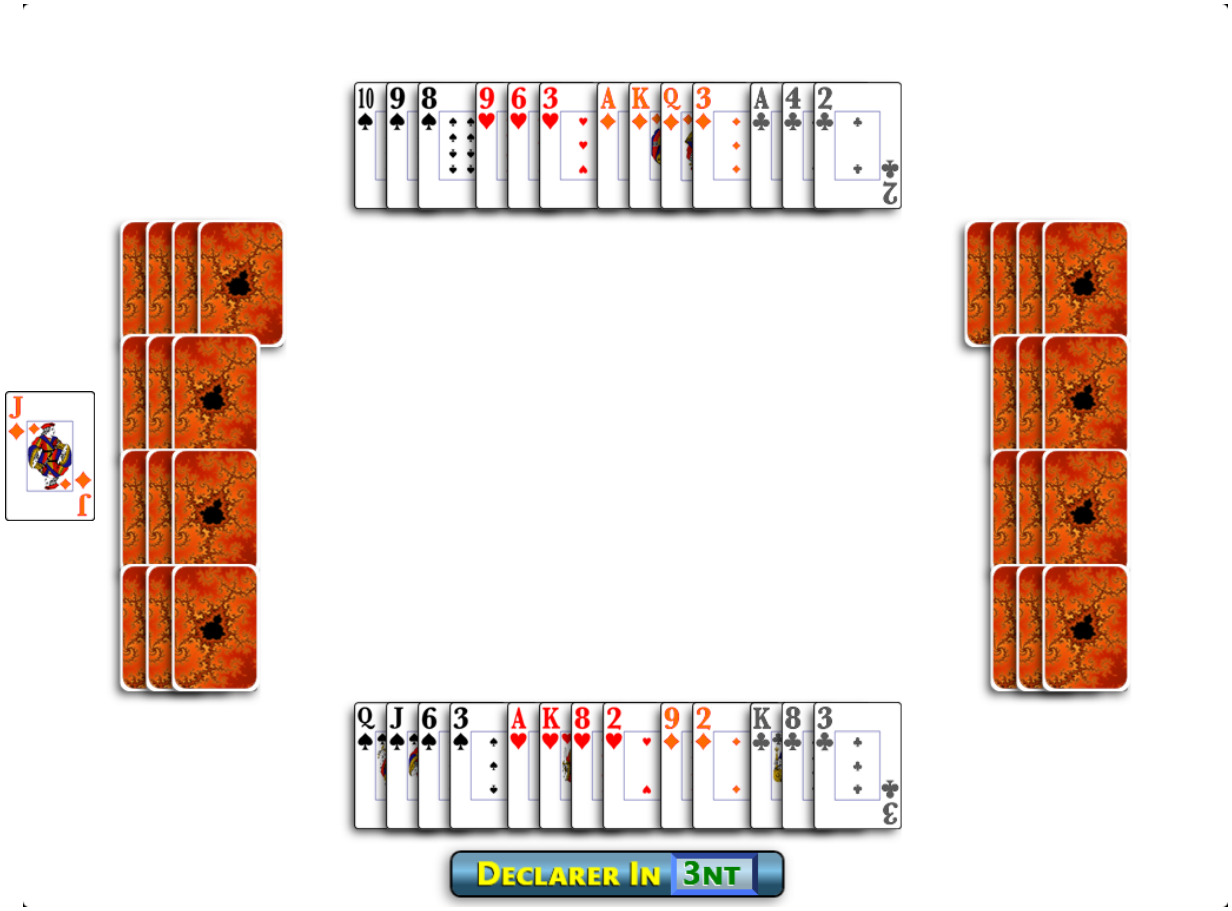
Will you make your contract?

Give reasons for your decision.

DO NOT GO TO THE NEXT PAGE UNTIL YOU HAVE ANSWERED.

You will make your contract.

But only if you play your cards right!



Analysis

You can easily see seven tricks in aces and kings. Where are the other two tricks coming from? They must come from spades. Once you have lost to both the ♠A,K you will have two spade winners left.

Once you see this, the play becomes straightforward.

- Win the first trick.
- Play a spade and lose it.
- On any lead by the opponents (assumed not spades), win the trick and you will still have one winner left in this suit.
- Play another spade and lose it.
- Win the next lead by the opponents.
- You now have two spade winners to add to your initial seven.

Once again, we see:

Losing the lead is NOT the same as losing control.

We were **ALWAYS** in control. To make this contract we **MUST** lose the lead twice.

END