



# Notrump and the Queen of Spades

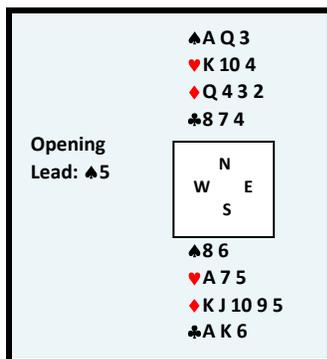


**Jim Jackson**

In the last three articles we have looked at how to plan our play in notrump and the process we use as declarer or defender to decide when to apply a hold-up play.

This month we'll look at a few allied situations that arise often in both club and tournament play. In the following boards, sitting South, you are in a 3NT contract and West, who uses standard leads, plops down the ♠5.

Decide how to play the hand before you read my recommendation for each example.

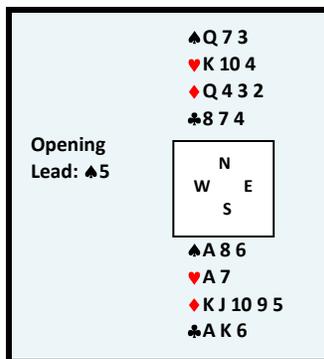


The first board is a review from the

March column. Once you drive out the ♦A, you have nine guaranteed tricks: a spade, two hearts, four diamonds and two clubs. You are not afraid of a switch to hearts or clubs because you have double stoppers.

To guarantee the contract you learned to call for Dummy's ♠3. That way when East wins the trick, if he chooses to return spades it will be into your ♠A-Q tenace, guaranteeing you a second stop in spades when you inevitably lose to the ♦A. Of course if he switches suits you'll still get your nine tricks including the ♠A.

In the second board you still have the ♠A and ♠Q, but they are split between Dummy and Declarer. Declarer has one more spade and one less heart. Which spade to you call from Dummy?



Again you should call for the ♠3. Applying the rule of 11, we suspect East has only one card higher than

the ♠5. If you are extremely lucky, it will be the ♠K. In any event, whatever he plays, you will win the trick in hand.

In the general situation, you would try to keep West out of the lead for the rest of the board. East is not a problem. If he leads spades, your ♠Q is a second stopper in the suit since West must play before Dummy.

Unfortunately, in this board you can't control who has the ♦A, so you lead diamonds until you drive it out.

If East has it, you are completely safe; if West wins the trick and leads a spade, you'll need to go up with the ♠Q and hope West didn't make an inspired lead from the ♠9-5.

For the next board (see the next page for the diagram), you have one less spade in Dummy and one more heart. The rule of 11 suggests East has two cards greater than the ♠5.

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## Notrump and the Queen of Spades

♠Q 3  
♥K 10 4 3  
♦Q 4 3 2  
♣8 7 4

Opening  
Lead: ♠5

N		
W		E
	S	

♠A 8 6  
♥A 7  
♦K J 10 9 5  
♣A K 6

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Which card do you call from Dummy?

The ♠3 won't work this time.

If Dummy plays the ♠3, East will play a card (not the ♠K) requiring you to win with your ♠A. If you refuse to take the first trick, the ♠K will appear on the second trick. (Either East will lead it if he has it to smother your ♠Q or West will play it when you duck.)

You will eventually win the third spade trick with your ♠A—the final result is no better than if you had started with the ♠3-2 in Dummy and executed a hold-up play.

That approach only works when the ♦A happens to be in East's hand.

### Try # 2

No, the only way to secure a second possible trick in spades and guarantee the contract is to

fly up with the ♠Q on the first trick.

If East produces the ♠K, you will need to hold-up playing your ♠A until the third spade lead and then hope East also has the ♦A.

If the ♠Q holds, your contract is guaranteed since you can drive out the ♦A while you retain the ♠A as a stopper.

In the next example we are back to a six-card spade holding and Dummy's hand has improved from the second example by converting the ♠7 to the ♠10, but Declarer's holding worsened a tad, dropping the ♠6 to a ♠2.

Do those changes make a difference?

♠Q 10 3  
♥K 10 4  
♦Q 4 3 2  
♣8 7 4

Opening  
Lead: ♠5

N		
W		E
	S	

♠A 8 2  
♥A 7  
♦K J 10 9 5  
♣A K 6

Well, I admit to being a bit cynical at times, but I'm not jerking your chain with that question.

Having the ♠10 makes a ton of difference. With it you are in a much stronger position to assure two spade stoppers and the contract.

The rule of 11 suggests East has two cards greater than the ♠5. By inserting the ♠10, East can only force your ♠A with the ♠J or ♠K.

If he plays the ♠K, you now control the two top spades. If he has the ♠J, you are in the same position as you were in the second example.

If East's top spade is the ♠9, then you win the first trick in Dummy and still have the ♠A as a second stopper.

If you call for Dummy's ♠3, you will not be a happy camper if East comes up with the ♠9.

Nothing is guaranteed, but more good things happen when you insert the ♠10 on the first trick.

*I borrowed these from someone; give them a try:* Your aggressive bidding has put you in a spot. To make your contract you need to bring the heart suit home.

#1. You need four tricks and entries are not a problem

Dummy: ♥J 6 4  
Declarer: ♥A Q 10 5

#2. Again you need four tricks. You are in Dummy, but have no more entries.

Dummy: ♥Q 9 3  
Declarer: ♥A J 10 2

Answers: #1. Lead the 4 to the 10, then 6 to the Q. If the K has not appeared, then play the A. Works if RHO has K, K-x, K-x-x.

#2. Lead the 9 and play the 2. This retains the lead in Dummy. Next lead the Q and play the 10. Third, lead the 3 to the J. Finally cash the A. Works as long as RHO has the King.