

**Danger Hand
By Roger Lord**

**Dealer: West
Vul: North-South**

	North	
	♠ 74	
	♥ AJ65	
	♦ 108	
	♣ K9862	
		East
		♠ Q2
		♥ Q832
		♦ J6532
		♣ J10
West		
♠ K108653		
♥ K10		
♦ 4		
♣ Q743		
	South	
	♠ AJ9	
	♥ 974	
	♦ AKQ97	
	♣ A5	

West	North	East	South
2 Spades	Pass	Pass	2 Notrump
Pass	3 Notrump	All Pass	

Contract: Three Notrump Opening Lead: Spade Six

West’s opening two spades is passed around to South. Although 18 HCP and a stout diamond suit causes South to fear underbidding, he decides to balance with a non-jump, natural two notrump. North chimes in with three notrump, placing the contract.

The six of spades is led, and the spades are the same as on last week’s hand, as East follows with the queen. This time with a new hand, declarer should win trick one with his ace, in order to keep the “danger hand” off lead. (If East gets in, he would be happy to return a spade through South’s J9—thus, East is the danger hand.)

Counting his winners, declarer can take the spade ace, the heart ace, and the ace-king of clubs. For nine, he would like to take five diamond tricks, but how should he play the suit?

Declarer should go to dummy with a club to the king and run the ten of diamonds, finessing for the jack.

When the ten holds, the eight of diamonds is continued to the nine, and the high honors comprise the nine tricks. This card combination is not the normal “book” percentage play whereby the AKQ are led from the top. West’s weak two-bid changes the odds of finding the jack. The West hand has (presumably) six spades and seven non-spades; the East hand has two spades and eleven non-spades. Thus, the odds favor East’s holding the jack by 11-7, a percentage greater than the normal play for the drop.

Besides, declarer wants to keep East off the lead. If West has the diamond jack and wins the finesse, you’re not down yet-- there still would be a chance to find a ninth trick before defenders take five or more.

Card Combination

This time, Dummy’s seven-card suit provides the only entries to dummy—there are no outside honor cards.

Dummy
AKJ7532

Declarer
64

- A. Play to take all seven tricks.
- B. Play to run the suit—you can afford one loser

Answers :

- A. Lay down the ace. If both follow, lay down the king (play for the drop). This play has a winning percentage of 52%. If you can guess better, be our guessed.
- B. Duck in both hands. This means play a low card from declarer and dummy (not the jack). If neither hand shows out, the suit must run by next playing the ace and king, inasmuch as neither defender had four. If East shows out on the first lead, return to hand and finesse the jack, picking up the rest of the suit. If West shows out on the first lead, too bad.

P. S. Don’t let some wise guy LHO deter you from ducking on the first lead by dropping his queen. He is entitled to play the queen from Q1098, so if you cover with the jack or king, you have been swindled.