

The “Obvious” Game

Your partner opens 1♣, showing some number of clubs between 2 and 13 and you hold a pretty flat, uninspiring “majorless” collection, an honour in each suit and a suit which barely passes as your longest and strongest....but you do have enough hcp to play game. You know...something like ♠ A32 ♥ K86 ♦ A872 ♣ Q97.

It seems obvious what to bid...3NT...but wait. Your right-hand opponent has made a take-out double, no doubt with both major suits. There is a small snag in bidding 3NT. South on your left will no doubt lead their better major which might not be to your advantage. They, not the doubler, will know which major to attack. If you could get your partner to play 3NT, that would be better, but you probably cannot.

So, plan B, let’s see which major South would lead. Give them a chance to bid. I did and the next round was quite interesting:

West	North	East (you)	South
1♣	x	1♦	1♠
2♦	2♠	?	

Will one spade stop be enough to bring home 9 tricks in no-trumps as it seems partner is very short in the suit? It seems unlikely but you have unearthed an 8-card fit in the suit “which barely passes as your longest and strongest”.

Strange thoughts. Nothing could have been further from your mind than playing 5♦ a few seconds earlier. Yet, now, it is beginning to look like your best chance of success. A decent partner will not put down 4 diamonds headed by the 9. I had a decent partner:

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

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			Pass
1 ♣	Dbl	1 ♦	1 ♠
2 ♦	2 ♠	5 ♦	All pass

North's double and South's lead of ♠K made this contract easier to play than it looks. Winning the opening lead, I played ♦7 finessing the 9 and on getting to dummy after regaining the lead, played ♦Q taking a successful finesse against the marked ♦K. Trumps behaved and clubs could be set up enabling 11 tricks to be made.

Meanwhile, the "obvious" 3NT failed normally by two tricks. It was a poor contract even if clubs had broken favourably. A872 as a trump suit at the 5 level. That's not normally a great option but it was the only game which could make on this evening. "Obvious", really!

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