

# Intermediate Corner: Notrump Play with Limited Entries

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The best way to play a suit can change when you have limited entries. Consider the following contract, South playing 3NT in a team game after a spade lead.

The interface shows a bridge hand with the following cards:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
<b>W West</b> ♠ Q10763 ♥ KJ97 ♦ K103 ♣ 7	<b>N North</b> ♠ 5 ♥ 852 ♦ 965 ♣ AK10642	<b>E East</b> ♠ J984 ♥ Q1063 ♦ 42 ♣ Q53	<b>S South</b> ♠ AK2 ♥ A4 ♦ AQJ87 ♣ J98

At the top left, a dummy box shows 11 diamonds (D). At the bottom right, there is a control panel with a 'Pass' button, a row of buttons numbered 1 through 7, and an 'Alert' button next to a text input field.

In a vacuum, the best play in ♣s is the ♣A and ♣K, unblocking the ♣J from your hand. You make 6 ♣ tricks whenever the ♣Q falls singleton or doubleton. However, if either defender has the guarded ♣Q (as in this deal), you will have no entry to the established ♣s.

A better plan is to take a first round ♣ finesse. Whether this wins or loses, you cannot be prevented from taking at least 5 ♣ tricks, along with 2♠, 1♥, and 1♦. For example, in the actual deal, East wins the ♣Q but you now have the entries to take next 5 ♣ tricks.

The defenders are not powerless in this type of situation. Move the ♣J to the West hand. Now South has ♣98 opposite ♣AKT642, West has ♣J7 and East has ♣Q53. As before, South plays a ♣ towards dummy. If West plays low, South will insert the T, making 5 ♣ tricks.

However, try the effect of West inserting the ♣J! If South wins, the ♣ suit is dead, with East holding a 3rd round stopper. South can make his contract by instead ducking the ♣J. However, South will often go wrong at matchpoints (by failing to duck), playing for an overtrick if both ♣ honors are in the West hand. South may also go wrong at teams if he decides that West holds all 4 missing ♣s. Either way, only by rising with the ♣J can West give declarer a problem.