

Declarer Play In No Trumps Recap (Unblocking)

♠AQ62
 ♥A6542
 ♦A
 ♣872
 ♠1087 ♠9543
 ♥QJ109 ♥K8
 ♦J107 ♦9542
 ♣Q96 ♣KJ10
 ♠KJ
 ♥73
 ♦KQ863
 ♣A543

Board 1 : Dealer North : Love all

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	1♥	Pass	2♦
Pass	2♥	Pass	3N
All pass			

We have nine tricks (four spades, one heart, three diamonds and a club) and it's just a matter of how we unravel our tricks to achieve our target.

On a club lead we win ♣A, unblock ♦A, come to hand to cash the two spades. Now we cash ♦KQ and cross back to dummy's ♥A to enjoy ♠AQ. Nine tricks and success.

On a heart lead we cannot follow that order and must think afresh. We win the opening lead and cross to ♠KJ. Now we play a diamond to the ace and enjoy dummy's ♠AQ. We return to hand with ♣A to enjoy ♦KQ. Nine tricks and success.

♠9874
 ♥QJ10
 ♦965
 ♣AQ10
 ♠AK2 ♠QJ
 ♥A532 ♥876
 ♦A ♦KQJ874
 ♣KJ642 ♣83
 ♠10653
 ♥K94
 ♦1032
 ♣975

Board 2 : Dealer East : NS vulnerable

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		Pass	Pass
1♣	Pass	1♦	Pass
1♥	Pass	2♦	Pass
3N	All pass		

We have a general rule that we first take our winners in the shorter holding to prevent a suit being blocked. Sometimes we have to think deeper and modify that approach. Here, on the lead of ♠8 (2nd from a poor suit), following this approach would see us winning the opening lead with ♠Q (or ♠J). That, however, will spell defeat. Whilst we've made sure the spade suit is unblocked, we've not dealt with the blockage in diamonds. We cannot enjoy any of dummy's five diamond winners (on top of the one in hand).

We have to abandon our general rule and temporarily block the spade suit. We win the lead in hand with ♠A (or ♠K) and unblock ♦A. Now we can cross to dummy's second spade and cash the diamond winners. We come back to hand with ♥A to cash the third spade winner. Ten tricks by way of three spades, one heart and six diamonds.

A little thought goes a long way.