

Responding to 1 NT with Balanced Hands

Board 1

North Deals
No-one Vul

♠ A 9 8 7		♠ 3 2
♥ 10 9 5		♥ Q J 6
♦ Q J 4		♦ K 9 8
♣ A 8 7		♣ Q J 10 9 2

	♠ 6 5 4	
	♥ K 8 7 3	
	♦ A 10 2	
	♣ 6 5 3	

13		
11	9	
7		

West	North	East	South
	1 NT	All pass	

1 NT by North

Lead: ♣ Q

North opens 1 NT, showing 12-14 points and a balanced hand. With only 7 points, South knows the partnership lacks the 25 points needed for game and passes.

East leads the ♣ Q, top of a sequence. North counts four top winners. Force out the ace to develop three additional tricks in spades.

Play Theme: Driving out top honours in no trumps.

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Board 2

East Deals
N-S Vul

♠ Q J 10 9		♠ 7 6
♥ 10 7 5 4		♥ K J 6
♦ K 5 2		♦ Q J 8 7 4
♣ Q 7		♣ A 5 2

♠ K 4 3		♠ A 8 5 2
♥ A Q 8		♥ 9 3 2
♦ 10 9 3		♦ A 6
♣ K 9 8 4		♣ J 10 6 3

8		
12	11	
9		

West	North	East	South
1 NT	Pass	2 NT	All pass

2 NT by West

Lead: ♠ Q

West's opening bid shows 12-14 points and a balanced hand. East's response of 2 NT shows 11-12 points, providing a limit bid that invites West to bid game. With a minimum holding of 12 points, West declines the invite.

North leads the ♠ Q lead, top of a sequence and declarer can count five top winners. Three tricks can be developed in diamonds by conceding the lead twice.

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Board 3

South Deals

E-W Vul

♠ 9 5 4		♠ Q 10 8 3
♥ A 8 6 5 3		♥ 10 2
♦ J 10		♦ K 8 7 6 5
♣ A 7 4		♣ 6 5

	♠ A 7 6	
	♥ K Q 9	
	♦ 4 2	
	♣ K Q 9 8 2	

12		
9 5		
14		

West	North	East	South
			1 NT
Pass	2 NT	Pass	3 NT
All pass			

3 NT by South

Lead: ♥ 5

North's 2 NT response is an invite to game, showing 11-12 HCP. With 14 points, South knows the total must be at least 25 points and bids game.

On the ♥ 5 opening lead (fourth highest from the longest suit), declarer counts four top winners. Clubs can establish four extra tricks by leading from the top until the ace is played. Hearts can also generate a length winning trick.

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Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

♠ K 3 2		♠ 9 7 5
♥ J 6 5		♥ A K Q
♦ Q J 7 6 4		♦ 8 5 3 2
♣ A K		♣ Q J 2

	♠ A 6	
	♥ 4 3 2	
	♦ A K	
	♣ 10 8 7 6 5 4	

3		
14 12		
11		

West	North	East	South
1 NT	Pass	2 NT	Pass
3 NT	All pass		
3 NT by West			

Lead: ♠ Q

With 14 points, West accepts the invitation to game.

On the ♠ Q lead, declarer counts seven winners. Extra tricks can be developed in diamonds by driving out the ace and the king. Luckily, the defence can take only one spade trick as South only has two spades.

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Hands			
Board 5	♠ A 9 6 5		
North Deals	♥ K J 7		
N-S Vul	♦ 5 4 2		
	♣ A 6 5		
♠ J 2		♠ Q 10 8 7 4	
♥ A 10 9 8		♥ 6 5 3 2	
♦ J 10 6		♦ A	
♣ K 10 7 2		♣ 9 8 4	
	♠ K 3		
	♥ Q 4		
	♦ K Q 9 8 7 3		
	♣ Q J 3		
West	North	East	South
	1 NT	Pass	3 NT

All pass

3 NT by North

Lead: ♠ 7

The 13 points in the South hand are added to North's 12-14 points. South jumps to 3 NT, showing at least 25 total points. South avoids bidding 5 diamonds as it is a game contract requiring 11 tricks.

On the ♠ 7 lead (fourth highest of longest suit), declarer counts three top winners. The spade lead should be won in declarer's hand, and should then play a diamond to set up five tricks in that suit. Driving out the ace establishes two additional heart tricks.

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Hands			
Board 6	♠ 9 8		
East Deals	♥ J 10 7 5		
E-W Vul	♦ K J 9 5 3		
	♣ K J		
♠ Q 10 6		♠ K J 5	
♥ A Q 3		♥ K 8 6	
♦ 6 4 2		♦ A Q	
♣ 10 9 5 4		♣ 8 7 6 3 2	
	♠ A 7 4 3 2		
	♥ 9 4 2		
	♦ 10 8 7		
	♣ A Q		
West	North	East	South
		1 NT	All pass

1 NT by East

Lead: ♠ 3

With only 8 points and a balanced hand, West correctly passes, knowing the partnership lacks the 25+ combined points required to make game opposite a 12-14 point 1 NT opener.

On the ♠ 3 lead (fourth highest from the longest suit), declarer counts four top winners. Despite the clubs appearing small, the declarer holds 9 of them, leaving only 4 for the opponents. This allows for 3 tricks to be developed in the suit.

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