



Pat Harrington

Play & Learn

♠ K Q J 4
 ♥ Q 3
 ♦ J 9 2
 ♣ A 6 5 2

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

♠ A 8 6 3 2
 ♥ 9 6
 ♦ A Q 7 4
 ♣ 8 3

♠ 7 5
 ♥ A K J 10 7 4
 ♦ 10 6
 ♣ K 7 4

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

eliminated to make 4♥.

- Once the defenders take their ♠A, declarer can use a top spade to discard a loser. Driving out the ♠A lets East–West in to cash their three top tricks, so your answer is to discard the slow club loser.
- Plan the order of plays. In order to discard a loser on spades, you have to lead spades three times. East–West have seven spades, which are likely to split 4–3. Still, it would be safer to draw trumps first, which won't give up the lead or affect timing. If the defenders wait until the second spade lead to win their ♠A, you'll need an entry to dummy's third high spade. The ♣A can serve that purpose only if you won the opening lead with South's ♣K.

Cover up the East–West hands and make a step-by-step plan for South in 4♠. West leads the ♣Q and East follows with the ♣3.

♠ 8
 ♥ Q 8 5 3
 ♦ K Q 10 8 3
 ♣ A K 8

♠ A 6
 ♥ A 7 6 4
 ♦ 9 7 6
 ♣ Q J 10 9

♠ 3 2
 ♥ K J 9 2
 ♦ A J 4 2
 ♣ 6 5 3

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

West	North	East	South
			4♠
Pass	Pass	Pass	

- South's losers are one spade (fast), one heart (fast), one diamond (fast) and one club (slow even after winning the opening lead). One loser must be eliminated.
- Your sole option is to discard one loser. Promoting diamonds provides a place to discard the slow club loser.
- You can't afford to draw trumps immediately! When East–West get in with the ♠A, they can continue clubs, prematurely removing the only entry to dummy's high diamonds. Win dummy's ♣K at trick one and lead the ♦K at trick two. If the defenders don't take it, you've made your contract. If they do take it, they can't take enough tricks to beat you because you still have the high club in dummy to reach the high diamond where you will discard your losing club. If they do not return a club, you can start to draw trumps, but as soon as they make you take the ♣A, you have to take your discard. □

It's all in the follow-through

In a suit contract, declarer counts losers and categorizes them as fast losers that the opponents can win when they gain the lead or slow losers that will be ready for the opponents to take eventually, but not yet. Here are three steps for making a plan to eliminate your losers:

- Identify and categorize your losers. When the trump suit is unevenly split between declarer and dummy, count losers from the longer trump hand — usually declarer's hand.
- Focus on eliminating your losers. You have three basic options for avoiding losers: trumping, dumping (discarding) or finessing.
- Plan your timing. Which suit should be played first? Is drawing trumps the top priority? Are there entry problems? Can you afford to lose the lead now, later, or not at all?

Plan South's play in 4♥ after West leads the ♣Q and East follows with the ♣3.

See next column

- Losers counted from declarer's (South's) hand are one spade (fast), two diamonds (fast) and one club (slow). One loser must be