

Play & Learn



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Dummy's long strong suit

Plan your play as West, playing in 4♠ on these three deals. North leads the ♥Q.

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

West's losers are two clubs and three hearts. Two losers must be avoided. A long strong suit in dummy is a clue. It's a perfect place to discard losers but only after trumps are drawn. When you think about using a long suit, think about the *entries* needed to use it. The ♦5 is the only card that can get declarer to dummy and must be saved for the time when diamonds are ready to run — after the ♦A is played. Cash the winners in the shorter hand first when running a long suit. Your plan: Win the ♥A, draw trumps, then play the ♦A and the ♦5 to run diamonds, discarding three losers to make an overtrick.

How will entries affect your play on Deal 2?

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

West's losers are one diamond (fast), two hearts (slow) and two clubs (fast). Again, two losers must be avoided and again, discarding losers on dummy's long diamond suit is the key to success. With only three

fast losers, it's safe to give up a trick to the ♦A. Even with a general plan in mind, there are three ways for a declarer who doesn't plan carefully to go wrong. Do you see them?

Declarers who fail to draw all the trumps risk seeing a diamond winner ruffed. As we mentioned on Deal 1, entries are important when playing a long suit. The other two potential errors involve the entry to use dummy's long diamonds once they are good.

Again, declarer should play the high diamond from the short hand first, starting to promote diamonds with the ♦K. This gives declarer the entries needed to lead diamonds as many times as it takes to drive out the ace. The defenders don't always win an ace the first time declarer leads a suit, so declarer should save an entry to the diamonds in some other suit. The ♥K is that entry. That means winning the opening lead with the ♥A. Declarers who win the ♥K at trick one give the defenders a chance to foil them by holding up once on the ♦A to render dummy's long suit useless. Be disciplined. Plan carefully *before* playing the first card from dummy.

What's your plan on Deal 3? Again, the contract is 4♠. North leads the ♥Q.

West	East
♠ A K Q J 7	♠ 10 5 2
♥ A 6 4 3	♥ 7 5 2
♦ A	♦ K Q J 10
♣ Q 4 2	♣ 7 5 3

West's losers are three clubs and

three hearts. Again, dummy's diamonds can provide the three needed discards, but the diamond suit is *blocked*. What is dummy's entry?

Leading the ♠7 to the 10 is the only way to dummy. If trump split 3-2, you have no worries. Cash the ♠A and ♠K, unblock the ♦A, draw the last trump with the ♠10, then cash three more diamonds. If trumps don't split, you have to run diamonds while you are in dummy and hope the missing diamonds split 4-4 or that the player with the remaining trump also has the diamond length.

A long suit is a valuable asset, but it's of no use unless you have the entries needed to use it. Making the most of those precious entries will be the focus of our next few articles. □



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