



Play & Learn

Pat Harrington

mrsbridge@embarqmail.com

Where there's length, there's hope

Plan your play as South, the declarer in 4♠, with the ♥K opening lead.

♠ J 8 7
♥ 9 5 4
♦ A 6
♣ 7 6 5 3 2

♠ A K Q 10 9 4 3
♥ A 6 3
♦ Q J
♣ 9

South's losers are two hearts (slow), one club (fast) and one diamond (slow). One loser must be avoided. Leading the ♦Q to finesse is possible, but consider other alternatives before putting all your hope into a finesse.

Dummy has a long suit, although it is so weak you might not notice it. East-West's seven clubs will split 4-3 more often than any other way. That will make dummy's last club a good place to discard that extra loser. You will have to lead clubs five times and can lead only once from your hand, so dummy needs four entries.

Take a close look at the trump suit

and you will find the needed entries. Dummy's spades are as good as the high spades in declarer's hand. An entry isn't just one card. It's a combination of a winner in one hand and a lower card in the opposite hand to link to it. In addition to the obvious ♦A, dummy's entries are the ♠J (using the ♠9 or ♠10 as a link), the ♠8 (using the ♠3 as a link), and the ♠7 (using the ♠4 as a link.) You'd like to draw trump immediately, but you must use each of dummy's trump entries to lead clubs. Win the ♥A at trick one. Then play a club.

At this point, the defenders can cash two heart tricks. If East wins the defenders' second heart trick and leads a diamond, your diamond loser is avoided. The lead of a fourth heart by either defender gives you a ruff-sluff, allowing you to ruff in dummy and discard your diamond loser. A club lead just helps you do your job.

Assume the defenders avoid helping you and get out with either a trump or a diamond from West. Win the trick in dummy and ruff a club. Those three low spades are your links to dummy, so ruff high to avoid coming up short of entries. Then use the remaining three dummy entries to ruff out clubs, and use the last club for a diamond discard. You will succeed as long as clubs split 4-3 even when the diamond finesse fails.

The defenders might hold:

West:

♠ 6 2 ♥ K Q J 2 ♦ 10 8 7 3 ♣ K J 10,

East:

♠ 5 ♥ 10 8 7 ♦ K 9 5 4 2 ♣ A Q 8 4.

The opening lead your opponents make can affect the plan you choose to make your contract. For example, would your plan to make 4♠ be the same on a trump opening lead?

A trump opening lead takes away one of dummy's spade entries so you no longer have enough dummy entries to set up clubs.

You would like to avoid the diamond finesse, but good defense after a trump lead forces you to rely on the finesse. There's no reason to delay drawing trumps now. At some point you will have to finesse diamonds, leading from your hand toward dummy's ♦A 6, but there's no rush. As long as you save one entry to your hand to take that finesse, you can put the opponents in and hope they make a play to help you. Your plan comes down to needing the diamond finesse to work, so you want West to have the ♦K. The defenders' cards might be something like this.

West:

♠ 6 2 ♥ K J 8 2 ♦ K 8 7 3 ♣ K J 4

East:

♠ 5 ♥ Q 10 7 ♦ 10 9 5 4 2 ♣ A Q 10 8.