



# Play & Learn

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## The forcing game

Let's look at a strategy that can help the defenders create tricks. Choose your opening lead as West after the following auction:

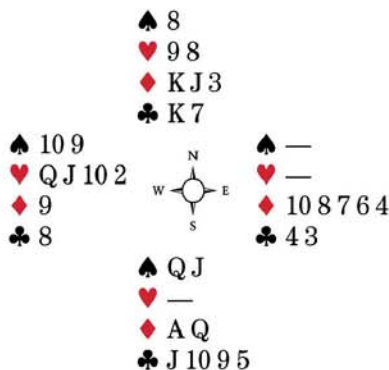
West	North	East	South
2♥	2♠	Pass	1♠
All Pass			4♠

*Dummy*  
 ♠ 8 5 3  
 ♥ 9 8 7 6  
 ♦ K J 3  
 ♣ K 7 6

*You*  
 ♠ 10 9 4 2  
 ♥ A K Q J 10 2  
 ♦ 9  
 ♣ A 8

You did well if you led the ♥A instead of your singleton. To get a ruff, you need to get to partner's hand, and this auction warns you that partner is broke and unlikely to have an entry. Furthermore, your trump length could cause difficulties for declarer. Partner follows to the second round of hearts and declarer ruffs. Declarer plays two high trumps, partner following once. Declarer abandons trumps and plays the ♣Q. What is your plan after winning the ♣A?

Did you lead a third high heart? That continuation presents declarer with a dilemma. If you don't see declarer's problem already, look at the entire deal minus the played cards.



Some West players would use the fact that declarer ruffed the ♥K at trick two as a reason not to lead another heart, but you have a very good reason to continue with the ♥Q. You can count the trump suit! Partner had only one trump, leaving five spades for declarer. Three of them are gone — two drawing trumps and one ruffing the second heart lead. You and declarer each have two spades. When you lead the ♥Q, declarer has to let you

win the trick or ruff, which leaves you with one more trump than declarer. Either way, you can defeat 4♠.

If declarer ruffs your ♥Q, there is only one trump left in his hand, not enough to draw both your trumps. There's nothing declarer can do to avoid giving you a trump trick and, as long as you keep plugging away on hearts, you will get either a heart trick or another trump trick to set 4♠.

If declarer lets your ♥Q win — the third trick for the defense — lead the ♥J and declarer is doomed. Dummy still has to follow, so declarer must ruff, setting up a trump trick for you, or let you take the setting trick with a heart. Either way, the contract fails.

If the missing trumps had split 3-2, declarer would have easily made 4♠. The only losers would be the ♣A and one heart trick. With the bad split and West's continued heart leads, declarer ran out of trumps and *lost control* of the hand.

It would have been different had the heart shortness been in dummy instead of declarer's hand. In that case, the short trump hand would have been able to ruff hearts. □



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