

Play & Learn



Pat Harrington
mrsbridge@embarqmail.com

The forcing game — declarer's counter

Last month, we saw that the defenders can cause trouble for declarer by leading a suit that declarer is ruffing in the long trump hand. This month we'll see ways that declarer might cope with that defense.

East deals with both sides vulnerable. West leads the ♥3 against 4♠ by South after the auction shown below. Cover up the East–West hands and plan your play as South after East wins the ♥Q and continues with two more high hearts. It's not as easy as it looks. Spades split 4–1.

Dir: East ♠ K 8 7
 Vul: None ♥ 10 6 4
 ♦ A Q 7
 ♣ Q 10 7 3

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

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

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

North's 2♥ shows a spade fit and limit raise or better strength. Using the cuebid advance to an overcall keeps the bidding low in case partner made a light one-level overcall. South has a good hand and wants to be in

game even if partner has only a good 10-point hand with a fit.

You have to ruff the third heart. You've lost two hearts and still have the ♣A to lose. You start to draw trumps and discover the 4–1 split. Continuing to draw trumps will spend all of your trumps and you still need a club trick to make your contract. What can you do?

You must play clubs before drawing any more trumps. Lead the ♣K from your hand. East will win, but he can't hurt you because dummy is out of hearts, which means you would not have to further shorten the trumps in your hand by ruffing. Dummy can do the ruffing instead of you.

If, for some strange reason, East refuses to take the ♣K with his ace, you will have the club trick you need and can draw trumps and then cash diamonds, giving East the ♣A at trick 13.

Now try this one:

♠ 7 6 4 2
 ♥ Q 9 7
 ♦ K Q 10 5
 ♣ 8 7

♠ A K 3
 ♥ K J 10 8 4
 ♦ A J 7 4
 ♣ 4

You, South, are in 4♥. West leads the ♣K and continues the suit. How should you play? □

You will lose one spade, one club and the ace of trumps. If you ruff the second club, you could be in trouble. Suppose one of your opponents has four trumps to the ace. If you ruff the second club and start playing trumps, the player with four to the ace will refuse to take the ace the first two times you play the suit. If you play a third round, he will win and force your last trump with another club. You will then lose two trumps, one spade and a club. Do you see how to avoid this fate?

Check the spade situation. You are going to lose a spade no matter how the play goes, so why not lose it on the second round of clubs? If you discard that inevitable loser, the opponents won't be able to continue clubs because you can take a club ruff in dummy instead of your hand.

The opponent with four hearts to the ace can duck twice, win the third round and force you to ruff a club, but you will have a trump left to pull his last trump before starting on diamonds. You will win four trumps, four diamonds and two spades for 10 tricks. □