



# Play & Learn

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## The Short-Suit Plan?

In previous articles we've seen that a short suit in dummy can be a clue for declarer to use one or more trumps in dummy to ruff losers in that suit. This deal puts a new twist on using the Short-Suit Plan.

Inexperienced players are often uncomfortable with responder being told not to rebid a five-card major. Can you devise an auction where North-South can find their heart fit without South rebidding hearts?

Dlr: North ♠ A K 6 3

Vul: Both ♥ Q 6 4

♦ K 5 3

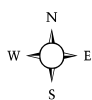
♣ J 5 4

♠ J 10 9

♥ 8 5 3

♦ Q 10 8 6

♣ K 9 6



♠ Q 7 4 2

♥ 9 7

♦ J 9

♣ A Q 10 8 2

♠ 8 5

♥ A K J 10 2

♦ A 7 4 2

♣ 7 3

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

North's 1♠ rebid continues the search for a major-suit fit. There are two reasons why South doesn't rebid hearts: Rebidding a suit partner has not supported tends to show a six-card suit, and any heart bid short of game is limited and non-forcing. (Rebidding 2♥ shows a minimum of about 6 to 10 points, and a 3♥ rebid shows just un-

der opening strength.) The only forcing rebid responder can make at this point is a new suit. With a four-card suit, South is comfortable bidding 2♦.

North's failure to support hearts immediately denied four hearts, so there is no danger of misleading South by bidding 2♥ now. Opener's delayed raise of responder's major shows three-card support. South can place the contract in 4♥.

Responder's rebid in a new suit is a common way of making a forcing bid to help determine the best contract. All bids in the above auction were natural, but many players use responder's bid of the fourth suit, the only unbid suit, as fourth suit forcing (FSF). Responder need not have length in the fourth suit. FSF is artificial, Alertable and generally played as game forcing. Opener's job after FSF is first to show three-card support for responder's major. Lacking that, opener makes some descriptive bid – often bidding notrump to show a stopper in the fourth suit.

How can South make 4♥? The play is the same on any lead. With four losers (two clubs and two diamonds), one loser must be eliminated. While a 3-3 split of the defenders' diamonds would make South's fourth diamond good, the odds are against it. If we had no other option, we'd hope for the best and play for diamonds to split, but there is a better option here.

You might have been wondering about the title of this article when there is no short suit in dummy. A singleton, void or doubleton in dummy

is a clear clue that declarer might follow the Short-Suit Plan to ruff losers in that suit. The clue is far less obvious when dummy has three cards, but as long as dummy is shorter than declarer, the possibility of ruffing a loser exists.

With three diamonds in North and four in South, the fourth diamond can be ruffed provided North still has a trump left. The plan is to cash the ♦A and ♦K and then give up a diamond.

The defenders might take two clubs, but then they will have to relinquish the lead. Use a trump entry to get back to South's hand to lead the last diamond and ruff with North's ♥Q to avoid an overruff. Then any remaining trumps can be drawn. Declarer wins two diamonds, two spades, all five of South's hearts and North's ♥Q for a total of 10 tricks.

With only three hearts in dummy, it was necessary to get the diamond ruff before drawing trump. Declarer could afford to lead only one heart before giving up the diamond. Playing a second trump would allow West to lead a third heart when in with the third diamond. Remember, the defenders are watching, and when they see declarer playing for a ruff, they can lead trump to prevent the ruff.

Handling a fourth-round loser like the diamond loser here can be tricky. First you have to notice the possibility of ruffing in a dummy that has no traditional short suit. Then you have to retain a trump high enough to avoid an overruff in a suit that has been led several times.