



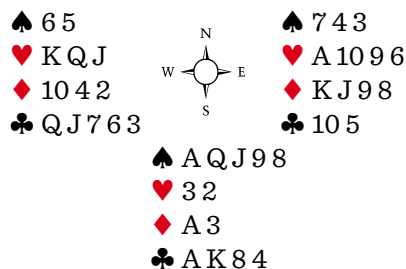
Play & Learn

BY PAT HARRINGTON ✉ ppharr@gmail.com

Clues from the dummy

Are you often in a quandary over how to plan your play as declarer? A careful look at the dummy might suggest a line of play. In this article, we'll examine the long and short of doing just that.

Dlr: South ♠ K 10 2
 Vul: Both ♥ 8 7 5 4
 ♦ Q 7 6 5
 ♣ 9 2



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

West leads the ♥ K and it's time for declarer, South, to plan the play. Step one comes before calling a card from dummy.

Identify the losers in South's long-trump hand. There are five losers: two hearts, one diamond and two clubs. To make 4 ♠, declarer must eliminate two losers. North has a doubleton club. A short suit in dummy is a clue to consider ruffing one or more of declarer's losers in that suit. South counted two club losers and it's possible to ruff both of them using two of North's trumps.

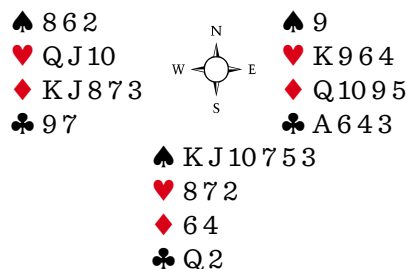
Without too many losers, declarer's first priority is often to draw trumps. Drawing trumps here will take three

spade leads, leaving North with no trumps for ruffing. Declarer must get two club ruffs before drawing trump.

As soon as the defenders relinquish the lead, declarer cashes the ♣ A K and ruffs a club. The ♦ A or a high trump serves as the entry back to South's hand to ruff the last club. Don't take any unnecessary risks. With such a strong trump suit, ruff both clubs high to avoid any chance of an overruff.

What line of play does dummy suggest on the next deal? West leads the ♥ Q against 4 ♠.

Dlr: North ♠ A Q 4
 Vul: E-W ♥ A 5 3
 ♦ A 2
 ♣ K J 10 8 5



West	North	East	South
	1 ♣	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	2NT ⁽¹⁾	Pass	4 ♠ ⁽²⁾
All Pass			

(1) Invitational, showing a balanced 18–19 points.

(2) South's 6 HCP plus 2 length points make enough for game.

South counts four losers: two hearts, one diamond and one club. This time, one loser must be avoided. Again, dummy has a doubleton, which suggests

ruffing diamond losers. The problem is that declarer also has a doubleton. In order to ruff a suit in dummy, declarer must have greater length than dummy. Dummy does, however, have a useful distributional feature – the long club suit.

A side suit where dummy has greater length than declarer suggests the possibility of discarding losers on winners in that long suit. If declarer leads the ♣ Q – high card from the short side first – followed by a second club, declarer can discard losers on any remaining club winners in dummy. The heart lead made South's heart losers fast losers, but the diamond loser is a slow loser, so declarer cannot be set when East–West win the ♣ A. To avoid ruffs by the defenders, declarer should draw trumps before playing the long clubs. North's ♦ A will provide the entry needed to reach clubs if East doesn't win the first club lead.

Declarer used the short-suit plan of ruffing losers in dummy on the first deal. Consider employing this plan when you see a suit in dummy with fewer cards than declarer – a suit where declarer will still have one or more losers left once dummy becomes void.

Even though dummy had a short suit in the second deal, declarer didn't have any losers left to ruff after dummy was depleted of diamonds. Dummy's long suit, however, suggested using the long-suit plan where declarer discards winners on good cards in that suit. ■