



Play & Learn

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Clues from the dummy – part 3

We've been discussing how looking at the dummy might provide clues to help declarer plan the play. The same is true for the defenders' plan of attack. Consider what dummy tells both declarer and the defenders on these two deals having the same auction:

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

Dlr: South ♠ Q 8 2
 Vul: Both ♥ K 4
 ♦ 8 7 5 3
 ♣ J 6 4 2

♠ 6 4		♠ A 7 5
♥ J 10 9 6		♥ A Q 8 7
♦ 9 4 2		♦ 10 6
♣ K 9 7 5		♣ Q 10 8 3

♠ K J 10 9 3
 ♥ 5 3 2
 ♦ A K Q J
 ♣ A

After West leads the ♥ J, step one in South's plan is to count losers: one spade and three hearts. Dummy's ♥ K appears to be useless, the heart shortness provides a clue to avoiding the third heart loser. As long as South's third heart can be ruffed, 4♠ makes. Drawing trumps first will deplete dummy of trumps, so declarer's first priority is to get that heart ruff. Do you see how the defenders can foil declarer?

If declarer plays low from dummy, West's ♥ J will win the first trick. If declarer plays dummy's ♥ K, East will win the ♥ A. The same clue dummy

gave declarer is available to whichever defender wins the first trick. A short suit in dummy often indicates that declarer's line of play will include ruffing losers in that suit and that declarer will want to preserve trumps in dummy to do that. To prevent ruffs in dummy, the defenders take dummy's shortness as a clue to consider drawing trump. If East-West quickly cash two heart tricks, they assist declarer in depleting dummy of hearts in order to ruff the third heart. If the defender who wins the first trick immediately leads a trump instead, declarer wins but must give up another heart before being able to ruff. This gives the defenders the chance to lead trump again. Since East has the trump ace, all three of dummy's trumps can be drawn before South regains the lead. As long as East wins the second heart to draw dummy's last trump, 4♠ goes down.

Dlr: South ♠ J 8 2
 Vul: E-W ♥ 6 5
 ♦ 5 4 3 2
 ♣ A 4 3 2

♠ K 6 3		♠ 5 4
♥ K Q 10 7		♥ A J 9 3
♦ 10 7		♦ J 9 8 6
♣ Q 10 8 7		♣ J 9 5

♠ A Q 10 9 7
 ♥ 8 4 2
 ♦ A K Q
 ♣ K 6

West leads the ♥ K against South's 4♠ contract. Again, the dummy has a doubleton in the suit led by the defenders and declarer has three losers in that

suit along with a fourth possible loser – the trump king. Before relying on the spade finesse working or a lucky 3-3 diamond split (neither of which works here), declarer should try to ruff the third heart loser with one of dummy's trumps. How should the defenders play to prevent this from happening?

East might be tempted to encourage with the ♥ 9, assuming that partner can also see dummy's heart shortness and will switch to a trump, but that won't work so well. When West leads from the ♠ K, declarer wins cheaply and can give up a second heart. The defenders can lead a second spade, but declarer will win (with the ♠ A if necessary) and get the heart ruff.

Being a good defender means thinking about how you might need to cooperate to get all the tricks your side deserves. With no strength in spades, East might consider the possibility that West has a spade holding that makes a lead through declarer's strength more effective. If East overtakes the ♥ K opening lead with the ♥ A and switches to a spade, 4♠ can be defeated. Suppose declarer wins the ♠ A and gives up a second heart. The defenders can now draw two more rounds of trump with the ♠ K and a low spade to deplete dummy of trumps. Taking a losing spade finesse at trick two is no better for South. West wins and leads a second spade. When declarer gives up the second heart, West must win to lead the last outstanding trump and, once again, dummy is left with no spades for ruffing. ■