



Play & Learn

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We've looked at several examples of deals involving a side suit (non-trump suit) where dummy had fewer cards than declarer. Dummy's shorter suit provided a clue for declarer to consider ruffing losers in that suit. Now we're going to focus on deals where dummy has more cards in that suit than declarer. What is South's plan to make 4♥ after West leads the ♠Q?

Dlr: South ♠ 7 5 2
 Vul: E-W ♥ 10 6
 ♦ A K Q 9
 ♣ 7 6 4 2

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

♠ A 8 3
 ♥ K Q J 7 5 4
 ♦ 6 3
 ♣ K Q

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	

South counts four losers: two spades, the trump ace and a club. How can we eliminate one loser to make 4♥? Hint: look for lopsided suits.

The only suit where dummy is shorter than declarer is the trump suit, so ruffing losers isn't going to be part of our plan. Dummy is longer than declarer in both minor suits. Sometimes such suits provide an opportunity for declarer to discard losers on extra winners in dummy.

Once South is out of clubs, dummy will be left with two low clubs, but the defenders' club length makes it impossible for either of these cards to be good. The diamond suit is a different story. After cashing North's ♦AK, declarer is void in diamonds and can discard a loser on the good ♦Q. The only loser that will be a useful discard for South is a spade, because discarding a club doesn't prevent the loss of the ♣A.

We have the general solution to making 4♥, but we still have to plan the order of play, trick by trick. One of the first things a new bridge player learns is to draw trump to prevent the defenders from ruffing declarer's winners. We sure don't want to see one of those diamond winners get ruffed, but is drawing trump a good idea?

While the defenders don't always find the best defense, drawing trump will give East-West a chance to cash four tricks: the ♥A, two spades and the ♣A. All of South's losers are fast losers – tricks that can be lost as soon as South gives up the lead. When we have too many fast losers, we cannot lose the lead until we eliminate enough losers to make our contract. That means we cannot afford to draw trump immediately, and must take the chance that none of North's three high diamonds will be ruffed.

Because East-West have seven diamonds, the odds are on our side. When we are missing an odd number of cards in a suit, the most likely split of those cards is as even as possible (4-3 here),

so three rounds of diamonds have a good chance of surviving without a ruff. South discards a low spade on the ♦Q.

Too many declarers play to the first trick without pause for thought. Planning the play is the key to making more contracts. Start by counting winners in notrump and losers in suit contracts. Compare your total to the number of tricks you need to win or can afford to lose in your contract. When declaring a suit contract, you will often have to eliminate one or more losers. Lopsided suits offer two possible solutions. If dummy is shorter than declarer in a problem suit, think about ruffing those losers in dummy. In lopsided suits, where dummy has more length than declarer, look for extra winners in that suit in dummy to discard declarer's extra losers.

Whether planning to trump or dump (discard) losers, decide whether drawing trump is the top priority. As you grow as a player, you will see more times when drawing trump must be postponed. You need a good reason not to draw trump. In this and past articles we've seen two reasons.

When employing the short-suit plan of ruffing losers in dummy, remember that drawing trump also draws the trumps that might be needed for ruffing in dummy, so you might have to delay pulling trump until you get your ruffs. When you plan to dump losers on extra winners in dummy, you avoid the risk of a defender ruffing if you draw trump first, but that is not always ➤

PLAY & LEARN – LOPSIDED SUITS
(continued)

possible. If you have a trump loser (as in our example deal), you can't afford to let the opponents in if the losers to be discarded are fast losers.

You also have to think about transportation to reach dummy's extra winners. Sometimes the only entry to dummy is a high trump that must be used before all the trumps can be drawn. If discarding is the only way to make the contract, you have to take your discard(s) even though you haven't finished drawing trump, and hope for a split that doesn't let a defender ruff the extra winner(s).

If you are not planning your play at trick one, doing so is an excellent way to improve your results. It might be slow going at first, but the more you practice, the better you'll get. ♦