

## HOW WOULD YOU PLAY? (2)

This week's hands are both looking at declarer play, with a different theme from last week.

♠ 10 9 8 2  
♥ K 6 3 2  
♦ K Q 6  
♣ Q 3

♠ A Q J 7 6  
♥ A 5 4  
♦ J 2  
♣ K J 4

You are playing in 4♠ and receive the ♥Q lead.

If the spade finesse works, you will have a comfortable 10 tricks, perhaps 11. However, if the spade finesse fails, you may go down in this contract, depending on what you have played at tricks 1 and 2.

The heart lead has removed one of your two stoppers in the suit, exposing you to the risk of a third-round loser in the suit. If you take the spade finesse immediately and the King is offside, a second round of hearts will leave you with a heart loser, in addition to the trump loser and minor suit Aces.

You must think about how to deal with this potential loser before tackling the trump suit, in case the spade finesse fails. In fact, you need to plan for this before you play to trick 1, because entries are an issue!

Let's go back to the lead and planning the play. You need to deal with this heart loser. You could use either diamonds or clubs.

If you utilise the clubs, you can discard one heart from dummy. Does this eliminate your heart loser?  
No.

If you use the diamonds, you can discard one heart from hand. Does this eliminate your heart loser?  
Yes.

Now that you have determined to work on the diamond suit, you need to consider entries. Since you are using your own long suit, you should retain your ♥K in dummy as the later entry. *(Yes, there is a risk of a ruff, but the importance of the entry outweighs that risk.)*

Therefore, you should win the first trick in hand with your ♥A. At trick 2, lead the ♦J (unblocking the honour). Should an opponent duck, you can continue the diamonds, creating the additional winner in dummy. *(Don't lead a small diamond to dummy's King. If you do that and they win, you have tangled your communications for the discard should a heart be returned.)*

The opponents win a diamond and return a heart. Dummy's ♥K wins and you take your heart discard on the long diamond. Only after you have taken these steps should you lead trumps. So, now you lead the ♠10 from dummy, taking the finesse.

If the layout is as below, you will make your 4♠ contract when many others will have failed.

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

Here's your next challenge. Once again, you are under threat of a 'deep loser' / third round loser in a suit, having to counteract the threat from the opening lead. See how you go.

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

You are playing in 4♥ and receive a diamond lead. Start planning...

You have three Aces to lose. However, you are also at risk of a diamond loser. If you lead trumps (hearts) immediately, when the opponent wins the ♥A they can return a diamond, and you have a fourth loser.

What can you do?

At trick 2, you need to work on making a winner on which you can pitch your diamond loser.

Should you use spades or clubs?

*(If you plan to use spades, you have to keep the ♦K as your re-entry to hand, so should win trick 1 with the ♦A in dummy. If you plan to use clubs, you must keep the ♦A as the re-entry to dummy, so should win trick 1 with the ♦K.)*

As you can see, you actually had to do the planning at trick 1 rather than trick 2!

Let's consider the two suits, since entries aren't an issue:-

If you use clubs, you can discard a spade loser from your hand. However, using clubs requires the club suit to break 3-3. Last article considered a few percentages; the odds of a 3-3 break are less than 50%, more like 35.5%.

If you use spades, you can discard your diamond loser from dummy. Using spades means you need spades to break 5-3 or 4-4. Especially with silent opponents, the odds of that spade break are excellent – well over 50%, at approximately 84%.

Clearly it is wiser to utilise the spade suit. That entails keeping the entry to your hand, so win trick 1 in dummy with the  $\heartsuit A$ . Now lead the  $\spadesuit K$  from dummy, unblocking the suit so that you have no problems accessing your hand for the discard. When the opponents win their  $\spadesuit A$ , they return a diamond, which you win with the King. You then take your diamond discard on the winning spade.

Before you draw trumps, you have one more job. You must ruff the diamond loser in dummy, then draw trumps. Now you will have 10 tricks, losing only to the three missing Aces.

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