

Draw Trumps Immediately and Set up Dummy's Side Suit

♠ -
♥ AK95
♦ K73
♣ K98764

♠ J10954
♥ J87
♦ J6
♣ J102

♠ 7
♥ Q1063
♦ Q10542
♣ AQ5

♠ AKQ8632
♥ 42
♦ A98
♣ 3

4S by South. Lead DJ. What is the best general plan?

This hand occurred in a BBC BBO session. No declarer made their contract.

Counting Losers from the South hand:

1. No spades if spades are benignly 3-3 (36% of the time)
2. No hearts
3. 1 diamond
4. 1 club.

Prospects initially look fairly good but, as you can see, a surprise is coming in trumps.

The first part of the plan is clearly draw 3 rounds of trumps. There is no reason to leave them lurking – you have no trumps in dummy to ruff anything. When we discover the bad trump break and that we in fact have 2 trump losers, the contract is in danger.

Can we do anything about the club and diamond losers?

We can lead a club towards the CK. If West has the ace and rises, the diamond loser will go away on the CK. If West has the CA and doesn't rise, then our CK will score the trick and there is no club loser. As you can see, no luck today.

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(Hand repeated for convenience)

Let's say West wins with the CA and continues with a diamond to the DK.

There is one final chance – can we set up the club suit to take the diamond loser? Always check to see if you can set up a long suit in dummy to take losers. In working out if a suit can be set up, you must have enough ENTRIES. Count the number of ruffs you need to make and add 1 to get back to the suit in dummy.

Two club ruffs will now set up clubs if they break 3-3 and we need one further entry to get back to the clubs. Hence, we need 3 entries and they are there – DK and HAK. Notice there isn't a 4th entry to dummy so we can't deal with a 4-2 break.

So:

1. Win West's diamond lead with the DK and ruff a club,
2. Play to the HA and ruff a club and get the good news of a 3-3 break,
3. Go back to dummy with HK and play a club throwing the diamond loser.

The defence get 2 trumps and the CA.

So, the general plan was, "Draw 3 rounds of trumps, lead towards the CK and if that doesn't work, try to set up dummy's long suit (clubs)".

Oh, and when I said the 3 entries were there in dummy, you did win the first trick in hand with the DA to draw trumps, preserving the DK, didn't you?