

## Clues from the Dummy

(Friday mini-lesson – 17 May 2019)

We all know how a declarer should examine the dummy to provide clues in planning the play of the hand. The same is true for the defender's plan of attack.

Let's look at two deals that have identical auctions (shown below) and consider what the dummy tells both declarer and the defenders.

| <i>South</i> | <i>West</i> | <i>North</i> | <i>East</i> |
|--------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
| 1♠           | Pass        | 2♠           | Pass        |
| 4♠           | All Pass    |              |             |

### Deal 1:

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

West sensibly decides to lead the J♥ (top of an honour sequence), and step 1 in declarer's plan would be to count losers – one ♠ and three ♥s. Dummy's K♥ appears to be useless, but the ♥ shortage in dummy provides the clue to avoiding a ♥ loser. As long as South's third ♥ can be ruffed, 4♠ makes. Since drawing trumps first will deplete dummy of trumps declarer's first priority is to get that ♥ ruff. Do you see how the defenders can foil declarer?

If declarer plays low from dummy at trick one, West's J♥ will win the trick, and if declarer plays the K♥, East will win with the ace. **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 declarer will want to preserve trumps in dummy to do that. **Thus, to prevent ruffs in dummy, the defenders should take dummy's shortness in a suit as a clue to consider drawing trumps.** If E-W quickly cash their two ♥ tricks, they *assist declarer* in depleting dummy of ♥s in order to get the critical third-round ruff.

If the **defender who wins the first trick immediately leads a trump**, then the defenders can draw two trumps (because East has the ace), and then when declarer has to lose another ♥, as long as

East is careful to win this trick, a third trump can be led, and now declarer must necessarily lose three ♥ tricks, and the 4♠ contract goes down.

|                |             |           |
|----------------|-------------|-----------|
| <b>Deal 2:</b> | ♠ J 8 2     |           |
|                | ♥ 6 5       |           |
|                | ♦ 5 4 3 2   |           |
| ♠ K 6 3        | ♣ A 4 3 2   | ♠ 5 4     |
| ♥ K Q T 7      |             | ♥ A J 9 3 |
| ♦ T 7          |             | ♦ J 9 8 6 |
| ♣ Q T 8 7      | ♠ A Q T 9 7 | ♣ J 9 5   |
|                | ♥ 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. Rather than relying on the ♠ finesse working or a lucky 3-3 split in ♦s (neither of which works on this deal), declarer should try to ruff the third ♥ loser with one of dummy's trumps. What should the defenders do?

East might be tempted to mechanically give an encouraging signal on the K♥ lead, assuming that partner can also see dummy's shortness and will switch to a trump. But that won't work so well. When West leads away from the K♠, declarer can win the first two trump leads and still have time to ruff the third ♥.

**Being a good partner means thinking about how you might need to cooperate to get all the defensive tricks your side deserves.**

With no strength in ♠s, East might consider the possibility that West has a ♠ holding that makes a lead through declarer's strength more effective.

**Thus, a thinking East must overtake the K♥ with the ace and immediately switch to a trump.** Suppose declarer wins the A♠ and gives up a second ♥, and the defenders can now draw two more trumps with the K♠ and another. If, instead, declarer finesses on the first trump lead, West wins with the king and leads a second ♠. Then when declarer gives up the second ♥, West must win this trick in order to lead a third ♠ and completely deplete dummy's ♠ holding. Again, the 4♠ contract goes down.

*Both these deals highlight the fact that the same clues in the dummy that give declarer a plan to make the contract can be read by the opponents to try and foil declarer's plan!*