

Declarer Play Problems - 3

Thursday mini-lesson – 16 July, 2026

1

Problem 1

- Continuing our series on declarer play problems, let's look at a few more hands

1.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ J72	♠ 1093
	♥ K52	♥ AQJ96
	♦ J4	♦ AQ10
	♣ AK986	♣ 42

- You are East in a contract of 4♥. South leads the A♠ and the defence takes the first 3 tricks in that suit and then switches to a trump. Plan the rest of the play.

2

Problem 1 – cont.

1. *West* *East*
- | | |
|---------|---------|
| ♠ J72 | ♠ 1093 |
| ♥ K52 | ♥ AQJ96 |
| ♦ J4 | ♦ AQ10 |
| ♣ AK986 | ♣ 42 |
- Your *loser* count shows there are four – three ♠s (which you've lost already), one ♦, and none in either ♥s or ♣s
 - How can you eliminate your ♦ loser?

3

Problem 1 – cont.

1. *West* *East*
- | | |
|---------|---------|
| ♠ J72 | ♠ 1093 |
| ♥ K52 | ♥ AQJ96 |
| ♦ J4 | ♦ AQ10 |
| ♣ AK986 | ♣ 42 |
- One option is to draw trumps ending in dummy and then lead the J ♦ towards your hand to take the finesse
 - Is there a superior line of play?

4

Problem 1 – cont.

1.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ J72	♠ 1093
	♥ K52	♥ AQJ96
	♦ J4	♦ AQ10
	♣ AK986	♣ 42

- Yes, there is
- *Always be on the lookout for taking advantage of a long suit in either your hand or dummy's in which you can establish a trick or two*
- Here, the long ♣s in dummy should catch your attention

5

Problem 1 – cont.

1.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ J72	♠ 1093
	♥ K52	♥ AQJ96
	♦ J4	♦ AQ10
	♣ AK986	♣ 42

- You have seven ♣s between the two hands and if the opponents' ♣s divide 3-3, you can establish two good ♣s in dummy on which to discard your Q and 10 of ♦
- Win the trump switch in your hand, then play the AK ♣ from dummy followed by a low ♣ which you ruff high

6

Problem 1 – cont.

1.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ J72	♠ 1093
	♥ K52	♥ AQJ96
	♦ J4	♦ AQ10
	♣ AK986	♣ 42

- Then draw the remaining trumps ending with the K♥ in dummy (your critical *entry*) and now the last two ♣s there are good
- Contract made!

7

Problem 1 – cont.

1.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ J72	♠ 1093
	♥ K52	♥ AQJ96
	♦ J4	♦ AQ10
	♣ AK986	♣ 42

- If ♣s don't divide as hoped, then you can still fall back on the ♦ finesse
- Playing this way significantly increases your chances

8

Problem 2

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ QJ5	♠ A94
	♥ 64	♥ AK3
	♦ AK9753	♦ 62
	♣ 64	♣ AJ872

- You are East in a contract of 3NT. South leads the Q♥. Plan the play.

9

Problem 2 – cont.

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ QJ5	♠ A94
	♥ 64	♥ AK3
	♦ AK9753	♦ 62
	♣ 64	♣ AJ872

- In a notrump contract, count your *winners* off the top. Here there are six – one ♠, two ♥s, two ♦s, and one ♣
- Where can we get three more tricks from?

10

Problem 2 – cont.

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ QJ5	♠ A94
	♥ 64	♥ AK3
	♦ AK9753	♦ 62
	♣ 64	♣ AJ872

- Once again, you should look carefully at your *long suit* in dummy
- Assuming the opponents' ♦ s divide 3-2 (the most common division) then we can play three ♦ s, winning two and losing one, and then have three more ♦ tricks established in dummy

11

Problem 2 – cont.

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ QJ5	♠ A94
	♥ 64	♥ AK3
	♦ AK9753	♦ 62
	♣ 64	♣ AJ872

- In what way must we be careful when establishing the ♦ s?

12

Problem 2 – cont.

2.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ QJ5	♠ A94
	♥ 64	♥ AK3
	♦ AK9753	♦ 62
	♣ 64	♣ AJ872

- Here we must be very careful to *preserve an entry* to those beautiful ♦s in dummy
- Since we have no entries in the other suits, the *only* correct way to play is to first *duck* a ♦, preserving one in your hand in order to go over to the A and K and the rest of the suit

13

Problem 3

3.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠ 75	♠ AK84
	♥ T62	♥ AK7
	♦ 973	♦ AK5
	♣ AT762	♣ 853

- You are East in a contract of 3NT. South leads the 2♦. Plan the play.

14

Problem 3 – cont.

3.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠75	♠AK84
	♥T62	♥AK7
	♦973	♦AK5
	♣AT762	♣853

- Since this is a notrump contract, count your winners. Here there are seven – two ♠s, two ♥s, two ♦s, and one ♣
- Where can we get two more tricks from?

15

Problem 3 – cont.

3.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠75	♠AK84
	♥T62	♥AK7
	♦973	♦AK5
	♣AT762	♣853

- Clearly the only place we can hope for more tricks is the long ♣ suit in dummy
- As in the previous hand, we have to be very *careful with our entries*

16

Problem 3 – cont.

3.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠75	♠AK84
	♥T62	♥AK7
	♦973	♦AK5
	♣AT762	♣853

- Win the opening lead and *immediately duck* a ♣ trick
- Assuming another ♦ comes back, win this with your remaining high honour and *duck another* ♣
- If the defenders' ♦s break 4-3, as is suggested by the opening lead of the 2♦ (4th best), they won't be able to cash more than two ♦s at this stage

17

Problem 3 – cont.

3.	<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
	♠75	♠AK84
	♥T62	♥AK7
	♦973	♦AK5
	♣AT762	♣853

- After you duck the second ♣, when they switch to another suit, now lead your last ♣ over to dummy
- If the suit divides 3-2, the ace will capture the defenders' last ♣ and you will have two more ♣ tricks in dummy to make your contract

18

Summary

- Take-aways from today's lesson:
 1. Look for long suits that can be established for extra tricks
 2. Be careful with entries to this suit