

Dealer: E
Vul: NS

♠ J8764

♥ 4

♦ KJ10

♣ K943

♠ K5

♥ A98765

♦ Q93

♣ A2

2H by South. West leads SA and another spade. What is your general plan?

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	♠ J8764	
	♥ 4	
	♦ KJ10	
	♣ K943	
♠ A2		♠ Q1093
♥ KQ10		♥ J32
♦ A876		♦ 542
♣ QJ106		♣ 875
	♠ K5	
	♥ A98765	
	♦ Q93	
	♣ A2	

2H by South. West leads SA and another spade. What is your general plan?

We are told ad nauseum that we are supposed to make a plan as declarer before we touch a card. It's like being told by our dentist to floss – we smile, nod and forget about it. And then wonder why our contracts flounder or we get tooth decay.

Making a **GENERAL** plan is actually very simple. With 90% or more of hands, I can tell you in a **SINGLE** sentence how the hand should be played. Despite half the room in an ordinary daytime session apparently misplaying this hand, this is the simplest of hands. The correct general plan is, “**Draw trumps immediately**”.

When in with the SK, you should play HA and another heart. Then get back to the South hand with the CA and lead a third round of trumps. You lose 2 rounds of trumps, SA and DA for an overtrick and +140. Easy isn't it?

How did we know, “Draw trumps immediately” was the right plan? Look at the shape of dummy. There is nothing that can be ruffed in dummy – all dummy's suits are the same length or longer than declarer's suits. We can't use dummy's trump as an entry and don't need an entry. Thus, there is no good reason to leave the opposition trumps outstanding, and great danger in doing so. When you led rounds 2 and 3 of trumps, you extracted 2 opposition trumps for every one of yours. If you leave the trumps out, they could score 4 cross ruffs instead of the two tricks if you draw trumps.

What happened on this hand at the table I was watching? Declarer didn't touch the trumps but aimlessly ruffed a few clubs, going back to dummy in diamonds and eventually incautiously tried to ruff a third round of spades. West overruffed and led a third round of diamonds which was ruffed by East who had discarded a diamond on the 4th round of clubs. A spade came back and declarer got overruffed by West again. Finally, there was still a trump to be lost as West had HK bare and East still held J3. Declarer lost 4 trump tricks instead of the 2 if she had drawn trumps and with SA and DA went one off.

Notice that trumping with small trumps in the South hand doesn't gain you anything. Once you draw 3 rounds of trumps, the H 765 are now winners in the South hand. There's actually danger in trumping in the South hand – if an opponent has 4 or 5 trumps you are losing control of the hand.