

Dealer: E
Vul: EW

♠ AKQ5
♥ 543
♦ 10542
♣ J4

♠ 1084
♥ AK876
♦ 6
♣ KQ83

E	S	W	N
P	1♥	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Opening lead ♦A followed by another diamond which South ruffs. How should South play the hand?

DECLARER PLAY 16 – RUFFING LOSERS IN DUMMY

Dealer: E

Vul: EW

	♠ AKQ5		
	♥ 543		
	♦ 10542		
	♣ J4		
♠ J762		♠ 93	
♥ J92		♥ Q10	
♦ A87		♦ KQJ93	
♣ A97		♣ 10652	
	♠ 1084		
	♥ AK876		
	♦ 6		
	♣ KQ83		

E	S	W	N
P	1♥	P	1♠
P	2♣	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Opening lead ♦A followed by another diamond which South ruffs. How should South play the hand?

Counting losers from the South hand which has the long trumps:

- (1) No spade losers,
- (2) At least one heart loser, more if the trumps break badly,
- (3) One diamond loser,
- (4) Two club losers – ♣A and the 4th round of clubs

There's nothing much you can do about the diamond loser, the third round of trumps or the ♣A. The crux of the hand is avoiding the last round of clubs loser.

The general plan is quite simple – try to ruff the club loser in dummy before you draw the trumps. I would:

1. Lead a club to the ♠J (assuming West plays low), and a club back to the ♣K
2. Say West takes the ♣A and leads another diamond which South trumps
3. South can now play ♥AK, ♣Q, ruff a club and run top spades
4. West gets their big trump at some point but South has the rest for 10 tricks

With suit contracts, the shape of dummy often tells you how to play the hand. If there is a shortage in dummy (a doubleton, singleton or void) and you have losers opposite the shortage, you usually have to trump the losers in dummy before you draw all the trumps.

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	♦ 6	
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(Hand repeated for convenience)

How did South mess up? They played ♥AK, ♠AKQ and only now led ♣J. West won with the ♣A and played the top trump (drawing all of dummy's trumps) and forced South again with a diamond. South was now on track to go one down by losing the 4th round of clubs to East's ♣10.

But South didn't lose the 4th round of clubs. East threw a small club on the 3rd round of trumps and declarer's C3 came good at the end for 10 tricks!

There is a good defensive maxim, "Keep Length With Dummy". It means keeping the same number of cards as dummy has in their side suits. The idea is to guard against any length cards coming good in dummy.

The same principle applies to declarer. If you know declarer has a side suit of 4 cards or more, you generally should retain your cards to stop length cards coming good. Here, East knows South has 4 clubs on the bidding. East should retain all their clubs in case they are guarding the 4th round of clubs.