

Board 3

South Deals
E-W Vul

	♠ A K 8		
	♥ Q J 10 9		
	♦ 8 7 6		
	♣ A J 5		
♠ 6 5 2		♠ 3	
♥ A K 5 2		♥ 8 7 6 4	
♦ Q 10 9		♦ K J 4 3	
♣ 10 9 8		♣ K Q 7 2	
	♠ Q J 10 9 7 4		
	♥ 3		
	♦ A 5 2		
	♣ 6 4 3		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
			2 ♠
Pass	4 ♠	All pass	

Auction Commentary: What should North do over partner's weak 2 ♠ opening? Some players use the Rule of 17 in these situations. Add your HCP to the number of cards you have in partner's suit. If you get to 17 or more, you should consider bidding game. Here, North has 15 HCP and 3 spades, so they bid game.

Opening Lead: ♥ A (promising the ♥ K)


Defensive Commentary: East plays low on the opening lead to discourage partner from continuing. With a doubleton, they would play high to encourage partner to play the ♥ K and then give East a ruff. West continues with the ♣T, leading the top of sequence through the strength in the dummy.

Play Commentary: At first glance, South has five losers, 1 heart, 2 diamonds and 2 spades. Two too many. We have a new tool in our toolbox which is going to solve the problem. The loser-on-loser play. The idea is that we give up a trick in another suit in exchange for one of our original losers, and in the process, we create more winners to discard more losers on. Win the ♣ A and play ONLY two rounds of spades, ending in dummy. Now, lead a heart. When East plays low, you will discard a club from your hand. This is the loser-on-loser play. You exchange one of your club losers for a heart loser, which breaks even, and also creates more winners in the dummy in the heart suit. West can win their ♥ K and continue clubs, but South will be able to play a 3rd round of spades to the dummy to discard both losing diamonds on the two remaining good hearts.

Takeaway: Once again, we have to be on our toes from the beginning. If we don't win the first club, the defense can switch to diamonds, and we will lose 4 tricks before we can set up and use our heart winners. If we draw all of the trumps, we won't be able to get back to the dummy and enjoy the good hearts. Take a few moments at the beginning to plan the play, and then dazzle them with your technique.

Board 7

South Deals
Both Vul

<p>♠ A 9 7 6 5 ♥ J 7 ♦ K Q 4 3 ♣ A 5</p>		<p>♠ J 4 2 ♥ 6 2 ♦ 7 6 ♣ K J 10 9 8 4</p>	<p>♠ K Q 10 3 ♥ 10 9 8 ♦ A J 10 2 ♣ Q 3</p>
		<p>♠ 8 ♥ A K Q 5 4 3 ♦ 9 8 5 ♣ 7 6 2</p>	
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
2 ♠ Pass	Pass Pass	4 ♠	2 ♥ Pass

Auction Commentary: East has an opening hand with 4-card support for partner's overcall, so jumping to game is clear.

Opening Lead: ♥ 6 (top of a doubleton)


Defensive Commentary: After cashing two top hearts, we know both declarer and partner are out of the suit. It doesn't seem necessary to switch to a different suit, and perhaps partner has good enough spades to take a trick if we continue hearts, going for an uppercut. (An Uppercut is where we promote one of partner's trumps to a winner by forcing declarer to ruff high to prevent partner from taking an immediate trump trick. This possibly allows partner's trump to be scored later, when otherwise it would have provided no trouble for declarer!)

Play Commentary: Which trump should declarer play at trick 3? If they ruff with the Ace, they will have to depend on the Jack falling later. If they ruff with the nine, they will have to hope North does not have the Jack -- (we know North is out of hearts: if South's preempt had six ♥s, and there are three ♥s in the dummy, we can count two in North's hand.) So, which is the better chance. It's a trick (pun intended) question! The solution is not to play a trump at all, but the ♣ 5!

This is another loser-on-loser play. We had a club loser, but we trade it for a heart loser. When South wins this 3rd trick, if they continue with another heart, the dummy now stands ready to deal with it cheaply. Playing a trump at trick 3 has nothing to gain; even if we guess right, we still have to lose a club later.

Takeaway: Be alert for these loser-on-loser opportunities. If you've counted your losers at the beginning, you will be more likely to find the loser-on-loser play. You can always at least break even, which may be all you need, as in the hand above.

Board 12
 West Deals
 N-S Vul

♠ A 8 7 ♥ A 6 5 4 ♦ 9 5 4 ♣ K Q 6	♠ Q J 2 ♥ 2 ♦ K Q J 8 7 6 ♣ 7 5 3		♠ K 6 5 ♥ K Q 10 7 3 ♦ 10 3 ♣ A J 8
	♠ 10 9 4 3 ♥ J 9 8 ♦ A 2 ♣ 10 9 4 2		
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
1 ♣	2 ♦	2 ♥	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	All pass

Auction Commentary: North's jump to 2 ♦ is not a strong hand. It shows essentially the same kind of hand as an opening weak two-bid. East's 2 ♥ bid is forcing for round and shows at least 10 HCP and 5 or more hearts. West has good support but a minimum hand and bids 3 ♥. This is not forcing; if East had a minimum for their 2 ♥ bid they could pass, so if West had anything more than they have they should jump to game.

Opening Lead: ♦ A. We lead our doubleton honor when partner has preempted that suit.

Defensive Commentary: North should play the ♦ K to the first trick. This promises the rest of the high diamonds. When North wins the second round, there is no reason not to try a third and put declarer to the test.

Play Commentary: This should seem very similar to Board 7. East can either guess which heart to play and hope for the best, OR, they can employ the loser-on-loser play and be certain of making their contract. Declarer can see that they always have a spade loser, so pitch one on the 3rd diamond! When North wins, if they try a 4th round, the dummy is now ready to handle the ruffing duties.

Takeaway: You're just applying the lessons you've learned previously. Count your losers. Consider the alternatives. Use the tools in your toolbox (loser-on-loser, holdup, etc.)