

Board 1

North Deals
None Vul

	♠ 8 7		
	♥ 9 7 6		
	♦ 9 8 7 6 4		
	♣ A K 8		
♠ K J 9 2		♠ 5 4	
♥ A 4 2		♥ 8 3	
♦ 10 3 2		♦ K Q J 5	
♣ 10 9 4		♣ Q 7 6 5 3	
	♠ A Q 10 6 3		
	♥ K Q J 10 5		
	♦ A		
	♣ J 2		

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
	Pass	Pass	1 ♠
Pass	1 NT	Pass	3 ♥
Pass	3 NT	Pass	4 ♥
All pass			
4 ♥ by South			

Auction Commentary: The strong jump-shift by opener is forcing to game. North knows that the second suit could be 4 pieces, so the 3 NT rebid by North shows there are not 4 ♥s in his hand. South corrects, as South's hand can only help if the contract is in one of their suits.

Opening Lead: West knows that they're long in Declarer's first-bid suit, so Dummy must be short. West would love to score a couple of those high ♠s, so when West chooses the lead of a trump, it's to cut down the ruffing ability for Declarer. (Declarer only gains tricks with trumps when they can ruff on the short side of the trump.) West chooses to lead the ♥ 2.

Planning the Play: Declarer has to give up a ♠ trick to start the cross-ruff, and North can now destroy his plan by playing the ♥ A and another ♥. There are now no more trumps in the Dummy. Declarer has already lost 1 ♠ and 1 ♥ trick, and there are 2 more ♠s to lose now.

Takeway: When declarer has a 2-suited hand and you have a long and strong holding in their side suit, the best opening lead is a trump.

Board 9

North Deals
E-W Vul

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

Auction Commentary: Responder doesn't support the ♥s immediately, but once the opener's rebid shows 6 pieces in ♥s, responder invites to game. With more than "just an opener," North takes the push.

Opening Lead: ♦ 2 -- Aggressive action is needed, as responder must have a long ♣ suit. We need to get our defensive side-suit tricks before that ♣ suit sets up!

Planning the Play: Declarer finds 2 ♠ losers and 2 ♦ losers... and darn it, they found a ♦ lead! Once Declarer gets in he can pull trumps and play those beautiful ♣s and pitch away the losers.

Planning the Defense: Declarer's second bid showed a 6th ♥, but they didn't jump the bid. West crosses their fingers in hopes that the ♠ A is not with North. When West wins the ♣ A, and shifts to the "usually safe" top of the ♠s, Declarer will never make this contract. Defenders will win the 2 ♦s and 2 more in ♠s before Declarer knows what hit him.

If you lead passively, a trump or a ♣, the hand will make 12 tricks!

Takeway: When you see a long suit in Dummy, and you think your winners are going away, you'd better get them on defense before Declarer gets in! If they have 2 suits, chances are that you and partner have the other 2. Grab them while you can.

Board 10
 East Deals
 Both Vul

♠ A Q	♠ 6 5 4 3	♠ K J
♥ K 9 8	♥ 5 2	♥ A Q J 10 7
♦ Q 10 9 8 7	♦ 3 2	♦ K J 6 4
♣ J 10 2	♣ Q 8 7 4 3	♣ A 5

♠ 10 9 8 7 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #006400; color: white; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: 0 auto;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">N</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W E</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">S</td></tr> </table>	N	W E	S	♠ K J
N					
W E					
S					
♥ 6 4 3		♥ A Q J 10 7			
♦ A 5		♦ K J 6 4			
♣ K 9 6		♣ A 5			

<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♥	Pass
2 ♦	Pass	3 ♦	Pass
3 ♥	Pass	4 NT	Pass
5 ♥	Pass	6 ♥	All pass

Auction Commentary: West knows that the contract belongs in ♥s, and at the game level. But when you jump to game, you're promising a weak hand with long trumps. So the 2 ♦ call puts the ball back in opener's court, to further describe the hand. When East rebids 3 ♦, West likes the hand even more! A double fit! West's 3 ♥ call is a better hand than if they rebid 4 ♥ immediately, and it leaves room for EW to exchange more information. (Some hands would need to start a cuebidding sequence here.) East goes right for the key cards, and bids the slam.

Opening Lead: ♣ 6 Slams are the perfect opportunity for aggressive leads, especially when there's a long side suit. While the ♠ 10 looks like a "safe" lead, it doesn't look like it will get your side a trick. On this auction, when you hold 7 HCP and they get to slam, it doesn't leave much room for your partner to hold much. But all it takes is for partner to have the ♣ Q and your ♣ K sets up! Set it up first, while you have the ♦ A as an entry. (And if you lead into Declarer's ♣ AQ, you may not have lost anything anyway, since Declarer could likely pitch the ♣ Q on the long ♦ suit.)

Planning the Play: In a suit contract, Declarer counts losers. There is 1 ♣ loser, and 1 ♦ loser. The ♣ could have been pitched on the long ♦ in Dummy, but alas, the brilliant lead by South has doomed the contract. On any other lead, the contract would have succeeded.

(Hand by Karen Walker.)