

Counting Losers and Drawing Trump

Board 2
East Deals
N-S Vul

	♠ 10 9 4 2										
	♥ J 10 9 8 5										
	♦ Q 5										
	♣ 9 7										
♠ A Q 8 7 3	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K J 6 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ 2		♥ Q 7 4									
♦ 8 7		♦ A K 9 4 2									
♣ K Q J 10 5		♣ A									
	♠ —										
	♥ A K 6 3										
	♦ J 10 6 3										
	♣ 8 6 4 3 2										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
		1 ♦	Pass								
1 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	Pass								
6 ♠	All pass										

Auction Commentary: West has a strong hand, but can still respond at the 1-level. Since a new suit by an unpassed responder is always forcing, West doesn't have to worry that East will pass the 1♠ call. East is thrilled to see the ♠ fit, and doing the math (counting the singleton), East jumps to game. Remember, East's jump to 4♠ is NOT a signoff. It tells West they have a fit and enough for game opposite a minimum opener. West has much more than the minimum partner was counting on... So let's go slamming, partner!

Opening Lead: ♥ J, top of a sequence

Planning the Play: You can only afford to lose 1 trick in this contract. Counting losers from the position of West's hand, there is 1♥ (which will lose RIGHT NOW), and the rest looks good. (You can draw all the missing 4♠ pieces with your top 4 trumps.)

What about blocked suits? The ♣s could be a problem if you don't play them correctly. Declarer needs an entry to his hand. When the bad ♠ split is uncovered, West realizes that pulling all North's trumps will expend all the Dummy's trumps, too. Declarer must unblock the ♣A from Dummy before traveling to his hand to use the other 2 top ♠s to pull North's trumps. Since Declarer wants to end in his hand to cash the rest of the ♣s: (1) lose the first ♥, (2) ruff the second one, (3) take Dummy's ♠KJ first, then the ♣A, then (3) travel with a ♠ over to your ♠AQ to pull North's trumps. (4) Then cash the rest of the ♣s, and the ♦AK. Nicely done.

Takeaway: A maximum opener and a minimum responder usually have enough strength for slam. Since West is the one who knows, West is the one who goes!

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Board 4

West Deals

Both Vul

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



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

Auction Commentary: Wests' balanced hand totals 19 points with distribution, so it's too good to open 1 NT but not quite good enough to open 2 NT. Once East hears the jump to 2 NT showing 18-19 points, East knows game is there. East also knows about the ♠ fit, since the 2 NT call is also balanced. West must have at least 2 pieces in ♠s.

Opening Lead: ♣ Q, top of the sequence. This is a better lead than the ♥ 10, because the opponents bid the suit.

Planning the Play: Counting losers in a suit contract, we know we can afford just 3. Counting from the position of the hand with the long trumps, East has 1 ♣ loser and 2 ♦ losers. **Without too many losers, your first priority is to draw trumps.** (*That's a pearl of wisdom - remember that one!*) Are there any blocked suits? Well yes, the trump suit is blocked. SO the first two ♠s will be won in the Dummy, Declarer will want to continue drawing trumps but needs a way to his hand. The safest way is to win the ♣ K at trick one, saving the ♣ A as an entry back to Declarer's hand. EW have fewer ♣s than ♥s, so it's safer to use the ♣s for transportation. Trumping a ♥ could be met with disaster.

Takeaway: ALWAYS make the plan before playing a single card to trick #1. If you took the ♣ A and then started the plan, you could already have failed. If the defenders get in with a red suit, they could easily give South a ♥ ruff, and the contract will fail.

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Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

	♠ K Q 10 9 8 7										
	♥ 8 3										
	♦ A K 7										
	♣ 8 5										
♠ 4 2	<table style="border: 1px solid black; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto; text-align: center; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td></td><td>N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td>W</td><td></td><td>E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td>S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 6 5 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 9 6 5		♥ A Q 7 2									
♦ J 9 5 4 2		♦ 10									
♣ Q 9		♣ K 10 7 3 2									
	♠ A J										
	♥ J 10 4										
	♦ Q 8 6 3										
	♣ A J 6 4										
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>								
	1 ♠	Pass	3 NT								
Pass	4 ♠	All pass									

Auction Commentary: A response of 2 NT is a perfect description of South's hand -- it's balanced with 13-15 points. (Some partnerships have other agreements about a 2 NT response to 1 of a major. Make sure you and partner visit this agreement and firm up its treatment!)

Since South cannot have a singleton or void in a balanced hand, North knows that there is an 8-card ♠ fit. South's bid was forcing to game (by agreement), so North bids 4 ♠.

Opening Lead: East leads the ♦ 10, hoping for a ruff.

Planning the Play: Counting losers from North's hand, there are 2 ♥s and 1 ♣. Are there any blocked suits? Are there any lopsided suits? Look at the ♠ AJ in dummy. They are both winners, but then the ♠s are blocked. With such power in ♠s, the safest thing to do is win the ♠ A and then overtake the ♠ J so you can draw the remaining trumps.

Takeaway: What could go wrong otherwise? If you enter your hand with a ♦, and then get careless and play the other top ♦, East gets an undeserved ruff and you'll go down one.

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Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ J 6 ♥ J 9 4 2 ♦ 7 2 ♣ K Q J 10 5	♠ A Q 3 ♥ K 6 5 ♦ A Q 10 9 ♣ 7 4 2	♠ 10 7 5 4 2 ♥ 10 ♦ 8 6 5 3 ♣ A 9 8				
<table style="margin: auto; border: 1px solid black; background-color: #008000; color: white; padding: 5px;"> <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
N						
W E						
S						
♠ K 9 8 ♥ A Q 8 7 3 ♦ K J 4 ♣ 6 3						
<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>			
			1 ♥			
Pass	2 ♦	Pass	3 ♦			
Pass	4 ♥	All pass				

Auction Commentary: North has a ♥ fit, and knows right away that they must be in game. So North has to make a forcing bid. And jumping from 1♥ to 4♥ shows a completely different hand -- that "weak freak" hand. North must change suits, and then the rebid of 4♥ shows the fit and places the contract.

Opening Lead: West leads the ♣ K, top of a very nice sequence

Planning the Play: Count the losers: 2 ♣s off the top, and nothing else unless we uncover distribution surprises. When you get the bad trump split news, you should stop after drawing just 3 rounds. Leave that ♥ J out there, since it's the highest trump. Let them ruff in with it... if you force it out with one of yours, you'll not succeed in your contract. Assuming you lose the first 2 ♣s and ruff the third ♣, if you use the rest of your trumps to force out the ♥ J, it will leave you vulnerable when West returns another ♣!

Takeaway: Sometimes the hand demands that you remove every piece of trumps from the opponents' hands. If your tricks are coming from a long, solid suit someplace, and you have no entry to that suit outside the suit itself, then you would probably consider forcing out their high trump before you start. In this hand, though, you don't have to worry about transportation.