




This series looks at the way declarer should plan the play at the start of the hand. Draw trumps? Ruff losers? Set up discards? Part 2 of 2. SA version. Updated Summer 2015.

Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 2 SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		
	♠ KT872		
	♥ T83		
	♦ AQ		
	♣ J93		
West		East	
♠ A		♠ 53	
♥ 9762		♥ 54	
♦ JT964		♦ 87532	
♣ K82		♣ AQ75	
	South		
	♠ QJ964		
	♥ AKQJ		
	♦ K		
	♣ T64		

This is the second series all about *What to do first*. When playing in a suit contract usually there are two main things to consider – do you draw trumps or do you aim to *trump* losers in the dummy (in the *short trump hand*)?

However, when you count too many losers you may have something even more important to think about first. Should you be looking to *dump* losers and – if so – where?

Some of the deals in this series bring in the idea of *tempo*. You have to get your tricks going before the opponents get theirs. Many hands become *races* between the two sides and you have to make sure you win that race.

Hand 1. This is not a difficult deal (we think).

The title may help, although the word may not be entirely familiar...

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ J

This deal comes from our "*First Trick Fiascos*" file, which is simply huge!

Bidding.

We have an obvious opening bid of 1♠ in third seat after two Passes; we have a pleasing hand with 16 points and a useful 5·4·3·1 shape. However, what is the value of a singleton King? Is it worth a full 3 points?

Partner raises us directly to 3♠ and we have to decide whether to advance to game. Well, the good shape and the well-above minimum point-count suggest Yes, the questionable value of the ♦K suggests caution.

We do know we have at least a nine-card trump fit and we know we have 25 points or so between us so we decide to proceed to game.

Play.

We receive the ♦J lead from West and naturally pause to **Count** and **Plan**.

We can see four fast **losers**: one Spade and three Clubs. Counting **winners** we see that we have ten (four Spades, four Hearts and two Diamonds). Once again (as in the previous series) the arithmetic fails to balance – ten winners, four losers.

The losers that we have are top losers – should we concede the lead we'd be handing the opposition the opportunity to take their tricks immediately. Not good. We cannot afford to pull trumps first as we are missing the boss trump, the almighty ♠A.

We look at the Hearts (it's hard not to look at them, they dazzle) but by the time we play three rounds of them one of them will surely be ruffed. How about the (unequally divided) Diamonds? Ah-ha! We could *dump* a Club on dummy's Diamond winner. But we face our first opportunity to snatch defeat from the jaws of victory at trick one.

If we try to take trick one in the closed hand with the ♦K, we'd never get back to the dummy without giving up the lead. So the solution is to

drop our ♦K under the ♦A., after all, our Diamonds are all equals. Then we cash the ♦Q and hurl one of our worthless Clubs into the void.


Essentially the hand is over after trick two as we only have three losers and eight remaining winners. Sure, we lose two Clubs and our Ace of trumps but the rest are ours.

Once again we illustrate how important it is important it is to play the hand through mentally before calling for a card from dummy. It's called ***Planning***...!



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VB#14 Y1 Timing - what to do first Part 2 SA	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 2
Dealer: East	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ AQT		
	♥ T842		
	♦ 95		
	♣ A864		
West		East	
♠ 953		♠ J87642	
♥ 653		♥ A	
♦ A64		♦ T872	
♣ KQJT		♣ 73	
	South		
	♠ K		
	♥ KQJ97		
	♦ KQJ3		
	♣ 952		

Another deal with too many losers.

How might you eliminate one of them?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ K

Bidding.

We open 1♥ in second position after a Pass by East. North raises to 3♥ and we have to decide whether to bid game.

Well, on the plus side we do have 15 points. On the minus side 3 of those points are wrapped up in a singleton King and we have no Aces.

Still, with a combined 25 points (give or take) and a good trump fit we should really be looking to bid game so we advance to 4♥.

Play.

West has an easy lead of the ♣K from his powerful sequence and, after the mandatory show of gratitude to partner for his sterling work in both his bidding and his displaying of the dummy, we settle down to **Count** and **Plan**.

Winners... we can see three Spades, four slow Hearts (once the ♥A has been dislodged from its hiding place) two slow Diamonds (again, once the ♦A has gone) and the ♣A. That totals ten winners. Not only that but we should be able to ruff at least one Diamond on table (in the *short trump hand*, note) so we are looking at overtricks.

When we have sufficient tricks for the contract we draw trumps, right? Not so fast! First we must look at losers...

Losers... there is the obvious ♥A and ♦A to lose. What else? Well, after this dastardly lead, dislodging the ♣A, there are two Club losers as well. So we are staring at four losers (or we will be, after trick one).

Hmmm... ten winners, four losers. Not so good – yet again the arithmetic doesn't balance. Secondly, we cannot afford to play on trumps or the opponents will harvest four fast tricks before we have ten. So we need a **Plan**, and that Plan involves *dumping losers*.

What we have to do is to dump a Club loser on a winning Spade. What we really want to do is to dump two Club losers on the ♣A Q but the

Spade blockage prevents us from doing that [*sigh*].

If we cash the ♠K we'd have no way of gaining access to the table to make the two top Spades. This horrible Club lead is a double-whammy; it has set up two tricks for East-West and it has also removed dummy's entry. There ought to be a law against it...

So, we have to sacrifice a trick in order to fulfil the contract; we have to *crash* the ♠K with the ♠A and dump just one of our little Clubs on the ♠Q. What is more, we have to do this immediately, before allowing the opponents to have the lead.

So...putting the Plan into action we take the ♣A and immediately cash the ♠A. Yes, that drops the ♠K. However, this releases the ♠Q which comes next and this allows us to *dump* one of the losing Clubs.


Having done this preliminary work the path is clear. We now play on trumps. Sure, the opponents take the ♥A, a Club and the ♦A but we still develop ten tricks in all. (Two Spades, five Hearts – four plus a ruff – two Diamonds and a Club).



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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 2 SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North		East
	♠ J86		♠ QT94
	♥ 9872		♥ AK
	♦ KQJ		♦ 9763
	♣ A85		♣ 932
West			
♠ 7532			
♥ 4			
♦ AT85			
♣ QJT6			
	South		
	♠ AK		
	♥ QJT653		
	♦ 42		
	♣ K74		

On this deal you have, once again, too many losers.

So how do you plan to get rid of one of them?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

As dealer, we open 1♥ with a 6·3·2·2 shape and 13 points. Partner raises to 3♥ and we stretch a little to bid game.

We do have ten trumps between us but there are no useful side-suit shortages evident so 4♥ may be hard work.

Play.

West leads the ♣Q from his attractive sequence and we contemplate dummy as we **Count** and **Plan**.

In terms of losers there are four – two certain trump losers, the ♦A and a slow Club loser. As Shakespeare said, **'Twas ever thus**.

In terms of winners we do have ten – two Spades, four Hearts (after losing the ♥A K), two Diamonds (after the ♦A has gone) and two Clubs. Ten winners, four losers – this does not compute!

Of course, playing off the ♠A K *might* give us an extra trick. The ♠Q *might* fall in two rounds – and the IRS *might* abolish income tax tomorrow. That, however, is not our focus. What we have to think about is how to eliminate one of our excess losers. How, and where, can we dump it?

A second Diamond winner has to be set up for a crucial discard and that must be done at once. Playing a round of trumps first would be too much – the opponents would have the upper hand (or the **tempo**). So, we win the Club lead in hand (that's essential) with the ♣K and must play a Diamond immediately. Note that taking the ♣A would be an error. Can you see why?

West plays low (best defense), allowing the ♦J to win. We patiently play another Diamond and this time West takes his ♦A and plugs away in Clubs. However, we are in the driving seat now. We take the ♣A and cash the Diamond winner, chucking the losing Club from the closed hand. Now we play on trumps, to extract that particular poison from the opponents.


Our *losers* are confined to two trumps and one Diamond. Our *winners* are two Spades, four Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs.



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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 2 SA	Contract: 4S By: South
Date: 24/03/2016	Board #: 4
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: None
Play this hand online!	

	North		
	♠ A98		
	♥ Q8432		
	♦ QJ		
	♣ A85		
West		East	
♠ 762		♠ 53	
♥ K7		♥ AJT6	
♦ 8542		♦ A976	
♣ QJT9		♣ 763	
	South		
	♠ KQJT4		
	♥ 95		
	♦ KT3		
	♣ K42		

Here is a deal where you have to decide – as ever – how to dispose of an unwanted loser.

Be quick, though, or the opponents will get their tricks first!

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♠
P	2♥	P	2NT
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♠ as dealer and see partner respond 2♥. With just a minimum hand (a 5-3-3-2 shaped 12-count) we rebid 2NT to show this type of hand (12 to 14 balanced).

Holding an opening bid himself, together with three trumps, North goes on to 4♠.

Play.

West attacks 4♠ with the ♣Q lead. Having thanked partner for his contributions we now settle down to cogitate awhile. **Count** and **Plan...**

A count of *winner*s shows that there are just five Spades, two (slow) Diamonds and two top Clubs. That makes nine – not enough. A count of *loser*s shows there to be four: two Heart losers, a Diamond loser and a Club loser.

At least the deal balances – nine winners and four losers. However, this does mean it would be unwise to draw trumps as we have insufficient winners..

With only nine winners we need to think of a possible way of setting up a winner and (or?) ditching a loser. Could we **trump** a loser? Could we **dump** one? If we are going to trump one we will have to trump in dummy – in the *short trump hand* – there is no point in trying to ruff things in the South hand.

Playing on Hearts is not going to work. It's going to take till a year next Thanksgiving to get those set up as a dumping ground and by the time they are established the opponents will have made off with their swag – a Club, a Diamond and the ♥A K. No, we need to look for a ruff on table. We have to maneuver to trump a Club on the table – having first ditched one on a Diamond.

So... We win the ♣A and lead the ♦Q. East wins his ♦A and naturally plays a second Club. Now we win the ♣K, play off the ♦K and ♦10, dumping a Club from dummy, ruff a Club on the

table and finally draw trumps.


Our ten tricks are made up of **six** Spades, two Diamonds and two Clubs.



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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 2 SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ Q T 4	
	♥ T 6 4 3	
	♦ K 8 5	
	♣ J 9 2	
West		East
♠ 9 7 6 2		♠ A 8 5 3
♥ 8 2		♥ A 7
♦ Q J T		♦ 9 6 3 2
♣ A 7 5 4		♣ T 6 3
	South	
	♠ K J	
	♥ K Q J 9 5	
	♦ A 7 4	
	♣ K Q 8	

On this deal you need to appreciate that the opponents are in a race to set up a trick in their suit.

What can you do to counter this?

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♥
P	2♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♥ after two Passes with a decent hand (19 points albeit a 5-3-3-2 shape). Partner dredges up a 2♥ raise, showing trump support and about 6 to 9 points and we have a stab at game.

So we reach 4♥, bid on the basis of high card strength rather than on any distributional quality.

Play.

West leads the ♦Q from his sequence and we must go through the old routine. **Count** and **Plan** (Count and Plan, Count and Plan...)

Winners... We can see only two top tricks (the ♦A K) but we should look a little deeper than that. There are two Spade tricks (once the ♠A has gone) four Heart tricks (once the ♥A has gone) and two Club tricks (once the ♣A has gone). So we can see two Spades, four Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs. A total of ten winners. (That's good news, in a contract of 4♥!)

Losers... Well it's easy to see that we have to lose three Aces. What is harder to appreciate is that we have a Diamond loser as well. Not only that but the opponents have attacked the walls of our fortress by leading a Diamond at trick one. Not good.

So we have ten winners and four losers. What happens if we were to draw trumps? Let's see... We win the Diamond lead and play a trump. The opponents take the ♥A and continue with Diamonds. When we lose the lead to a black Ace the opponents cash the other black Ace and take a Diamond trick. They also have silly grins on their faces as 4♥ is one down. Aaaaarrggghhh!

So the solution is **not** to draw trumps. It must be to dump a loser on something. What, though?

The answer is to look for a "long" suit somewhere. Clubs are useless – we have three cards in each hand. What about Spades? Ah

yes! We could set up a Spade for a Diamond discard. This must be done at once, though, or we lose the *tempo*.

So, we win the Diamond lead – crucially with the ♦A in the closed hand. Now we play the ♠K (**not** the ♠J, note. We can't afford to *block* the Spades). The opponents take the ♠A and shoot down the ♦K. We take that and play off the ♠Q (dropping the ♠J) and the ♠10 pitching that irritating, losing Diamond.

Now we are in the clear as we have eradicated a loser. We are in a position to draw trumps (losing to the ♥A *en route*) and set up two Club tricks (losing to the ♣A *en route*). Ten tricks.

- Can you see how the opponents could beat us if we took the ♦K at trick one?

(They'd not take the ♠A on the first round of the suit. Now we couldn't reach the ♠Q).

- Can you see how the opponents could beat us if we lead the ♠J rather than the ♠K?

(They'd take the ♠A on the first round of the suit and Spades would be blocked).

- Can you see how the opponents could beat us if dummy didn't have that precious ♠10?

(They'd take the ♠A on the first round of the suit and play back a Diamond. Now the Spades would be tangled and we'd have no entry to dummy).


Can you see, once again, the need for careful and thoughtful *Planning*?



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Y1 VBlue #14 Timing - what to do first Part 2 SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ A95	
	♥ Q3	
	♦ 742	
	♣ T8753	
West		East
♠ 743		♠ 82
♥ T842		♥ A976
♦ QJT9		♦ 865
♣ KJ		♣ A964
	South	
	♠ KQJT6	
	♥ KJ5	
	♦ AK3	
	♣ Q2	

This hand will bring home the difference between **fast** losers and **slow** losers.

What can you do with an excess loser?
Dump it or **trump** it?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♠, after East Passes as dealer, with a decent hand (19 points, 5-3-3-2 in shape).

Partner dredges up a 2♠ raise, showing trump support and about 6 to 9 points and we have a bash at game.

Play.

West leads the ♦Q from his sequence and we settle to a **Count** and **Plan**.

Our initial count of losers shows one Heart, one Diamond and two Clubs. *Once more four losers, dear friends, once more.* (Not exactly Henry V but you get the picture...)

What about winners? We have five Spades, two (slow) Hearts and two Diamonds. Nine winners. The Clubs are worth very little – it's hard to see how we could get those set up for tricks.

At least the arithmetic balances on this hand (nine winners, four losers) but that's not such a great consolation in a contract of 4♠. It does at least tell us that we cannot pull trumps immediately as we have insufficient winners.

So the problem is to generate an extra winner whilst eliminating a loser. That's the easy bit. The hard part is to answer the question: **How?** The only dumping of losers we can do is via Hearts – we can throw a Diamond from dummy on a winning Heart from hand. Is that the solution? It sure is!

At trick two we attack the Hearts by playing a Heart to the ♥Q. East takes his ♥A and swiftly returns a second Diamond. Too little too late – we have the **tempo**. At trick four, having taken the ♦A, we play another round of Hearts and at trick five we dump dummy's last Diamond on our winning Heart.

Now comes the *coup de grâce*, where we trump our losing Diamond in dummy. (Just as well we left some Spades over there and didn't draw trumps, eh?) After this it's all over bar the shouting. We pull trumps and give them the two Club tricks they are entitled to.

Ten tricks materialize from **six** Spades (five in hand a ruff on table), two Hearts and two Diamonds.