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This series of six is all about ruffing out dummy's long suit for extra tricks. Harder examples (2400 has easier ones)

VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit SA	Contract: 4H
Date: 17/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

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

Lead: ♠ A

As South we reach game in Hearts and receive the defense of two top Spades followed by the ♣K switch.

Now, just take a look at the bidding for a moment. You may not be used to partner raising your suit with only three cards but what was North supposed to bid after West had stuck his oar in with a 1♠ overcall? Pass would have been too cowardly for words and freely rebidding 2♦ on ♦Q 7 6 4 3 would be the action of a lunatic. 2♥, a *competitive raise*, on ♥A Q 3 may not be perfection but it is a whole lot better than any of the alternatives.

Anyway, at trick three the defenders have set up four losers for our side – two Spades and two Clubs.

To take advantage of all possibilities takes care. If the Diamonds are 4–2 and the trumps 3–2 it is necessary to play off two top Diamonds and ruff a Diamond in hand. With the Diamond blockage it is best to cash the ♦A K first and then take two trumps, ending on the table. If trumps are 4-1 then the contract would be difficult (it's not impossible, just very tricky. We'll leave it at that).

As it happens, Hearts break 3-2. So we ruff a low Diamond to hand (giving up the chance of a 3-3 break and an overtrick) and then draw the last trump with the ♥Q. Finally the two winning Diamonds can be cashed on which we can dump two Club losers. That swells the trick total to a healthy ten.

True, a Club has to be given to the enemy but so what? We have ten tricks and that's all we need.

North
 ♠ J5
 ♥ AQ3
 ♦ Q7643
 ♣ A53

West
 ♠ AKT742
 ♥ 86
 ♦ T2
 ♣ KQJ



East
 ♠ 986
 ♥ 742
 ♦ J985
 ♣ T97

South
 ♠ Q3
 ♥ KJT95
 ♦ AK
 ♣ 8642

This is the second series in this edition on *ruffing out a suit* to make extra tricks. In some ways this play is counter-intuitive in that you are *ruffing in the long hand* (usually suicidally bad play). However, the aim is to get the long suit in dummy established for an extra winner or two – and the only way that can be achieved is by trumping the suit until only winners remain.

To make full use of this play you have to take care with *entries* as much to-ing and fro-ing between the closed hand and dummy is necessary.

The first series showed you the basic idea. This set of six deals certainly has more excitement in the auction – whether the play is harder only you can say.

Here, in Hand 1, you have to overcome a problem of blockages.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 17/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ T95	
	♥ Q7	
	♦ A9763	
	♣ Q52	
West		East
♠		♠ 63
♥ AK982		♥ J6543
♦ KT84		♦ Q52
♣ J986		♣ AK3
	South	
	♠ AKQJ8742	
	♥ T	
	♦ J	
	♣ T74	

You are faced with an unusual hand here.

How might you go about bidding it? And how might you play it?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♥ A

You reach 4♠. With a solid eight-card suit you must pre-empt as high as you dare – the object of the exercise being to get in the opponents' faces, shut them up and to buy the hand as cheaply as you can. Here, West, with a fair hand and a promising 5-4-4-0 shape, has to bid at the five-level or forever hold his peace. How he must hate you for opening 4♠!

When dummy goes down you can see two things. One is that the opponents can certainly make a contract of their own (where is your defense to 4♥?) Secondly, you have nine easy tricks in Spades (eight trump tricks and the ♦A). Well, where there are nine tricks there are often ten and dummy has some valuable cards. Not only the ♦A but three fine trumps *all* of which may act as entries to the table.

If you are up with the game you should realize that you may be able to **ruff out** the Diamond suit. You trump the second round of Hearts and immediately set about Diamonds. ♦A, ruff a Diamond (with a high trump – you need those small trumps!)

Now a trump to dummy's ♠9 (but keep the ♠2 or ♠4 – you need one of those for later) and ruff another Diamond high. Another trump to the ♠9 is followed by a third Diamond ruff and *mirabile dictu* there is a winning Diamond on table sitting and waiting.

Now for the *coup de grâce*. You lead the carefully preserved ♠2 to dummy's ♠5 as an extra entry in order to reach the last, winning Diamond. You cash the master ♦9 and dump a Club loser. East finally takes his ♣A K but you have your game.


"You lucky *****!" says West, intemperately. Such language! Tut tut. Someday you'll point out that East-West could have made 5♥ if they'd have had the courage to bid it.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 17/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ T63	
	♥ J7	
	♦ A65432	
	♣ J4	
West		East
♠ 95		♠ 842
♥ T9853		♥ AQ2
♦ Q9		♦ KT7
♣ KT93		♣ Q762
	South	
	♠ AKQJ7	
	♥ K64	
	♦ J8	
	♣ A85	

On this deal you and your partner reach a marginal game. Marginal? Actually, "poor" would be a better word.

Still, where there's life there's hope and you shouldn't give up just because you can see losers galore.

Can you see a way home?

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

Lead: ♥ T

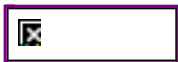
You reach a pushy 4♠ on this hand after a simple 1♠ – 2♠ – 4♠ sequence. Bidding 4♠ on your cards is a slight overbid but anything less is a slight underbid. What do you prefer to be? A man or a mouse? Anyway, 4♠ it is and West leads the ♥10 from his sequential holding.

At first glance you only appear to have three losers – one Heart, one Diamond and one Club. Can't you ruff your losers on the table? Well, East is aware of that plan and he's having none of it. He takes the ♥A and fires back a trump. Now you could take the ♥K and ruff a Heart, sure, but any attempt to take a Club ruff on table would be thwarted. As soon as you lost the lead in Clubs the enemy would fire back a second round of trumps and you would have an inevitable second Club loser.

It's time for Plan B. Can we set up the Diamonds? The answer is Yes, *we can* – but we need some luck (not to mention accurate card-play). We need both Diamonds and trumps to break 3-2 – if either suit breaks 4-1 we cannot succeed.

So we take the trump shift in hand (we need that ♠10 as an *entry* later) and immediately play a Diamond. To get the timing right we must **duck** this trick; taking the ♦A would lead to defeat. Another trump is returned so we win that in hand, play the ♦A, ruff a Diamond high, cross to the ♠10 and run off the winning Diamonds.

Unexpectedly we have an overtrick (five Spades, one Heart, **four** Diamonds and a Club).



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit SA	Contract: 6S
Date: 17/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	2♣
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	3♠	P	6♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ Q

As South we arrive in 6♠ and West leads the ♣Q.

North
 ♠ QJT
 ♥ KQ976
 ♦ Q2
 ♣ 753

West
 ♠ 6
 ♥ J853
 ♦ J976
 ♣ QJT8



East
 ♠ 754
 ♥ AT
 ♦ T8543
 ♣ 964

South
 ♠ AK9832
 ♥ 42
 ♦ AK
 ♣ AK2

This time, you get a chance to show some sparkling card-play in a high-level contract.

More interesting is how you might land your requisite number of tricks...

The preliminary **Count** shows there to be one loser too many. We're used to that, but somehow it seems more momentous when we're in a slam, doesn't it?

Let's have a brief look at the bidding. North's response to our 2♣ opening bid was perfect. He told us he had slam interest and a good suit. If he did NOT have such a gold-plated suit, he would have just made the temporizing bid of 2♦. His bid told us exactly what we needed to know. Once he raised our Spades, it was all over bar the shouting.

The play, however, is the thing. Unfortunately the ♦Q is a waste of good paste-board, clashing with the doubleton ♦A K. So we can see two losers: the fast Heart loser and the slow Club loser. Often when you have a fast loser, if you peer under it (kind of like looking under a rock) you will find just the winner you need. In this case, it is that great long suit in dummy.

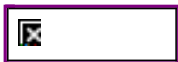
We need to ruff the suit out in the hope of making the last Heart good. We might expect the suits to split in the following way: 3-1 in trumps and 4-2 in Hearts. Fortunately, we have sure entries to the table in trumps. And we are able to pull a round of trumps each time we go to dummy.

So, the play (in detail), is as follows: take the Club opening lead and lead a Heart at once (if West holds the ♥A the hand is all over). Nope – East takes the ♥A and (naturally) returns a Club. So we take that and play another Heart (praying that suit doesn't break 5-1 and allowing a defender to ruff. That would be embarrassing!)

Now we ruff a Heart in hand ("high" of course), cross to a trump in dummy and ruff another Heart high. This play generates no more trump tricks (we always had six tricks in Spades) but it sets up the ♥9 as the master Heart. All that remains is to finish the process of drawing trumps (finishing on table, naturally) and cashing the last Heart.

It isn't easy when you have so much going on, but it is still very important to count your trumps. If you don't pull East's last trump before playing your good Heart, well – it wouldn't be a good Heart, will it?

Okay...take a very deep cleansing breath, and get ready to triumph again!



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit SA	Contract: 6S
Date: 17/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

West	North	East	South
-	2♣	P	2♦
P	2♥	P	2♠
P	4NT	P	5♦
P	6♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♣ J

You unexpectedly reach a slam in Spades after North opens 2♣.

Let's take a quick look at the bidding. The 2♣ bid is almost always forcing to game. (Some day we'll take a quick look at the occasions when you can stop short of game, but not today).

Since we don't have slam interest or a solid gold suit of our own, we give the "temporizing" or negative bid of 2♦. Now partner bids 2♥, which is hardly unexpected given the fact that we are looking at a singleton. When we bid our Spades, which essentially denies any interest in Hearts (ain't *that* the truth!), partner changes gears and goes for the sure 4-4 fit in Spades.

<p>West</p> <p>♠ 9742</p> <p>♥ QT</p> <p>♦ T65</p> <p>♣ JT98</p>		<p>East</p> <p>♠ 8</p> <p>♥ J943</p> <p>♦ KJ942</p> <p>♣ A74</p>
<p>North</p> <p>♠ KQJT</p> <p>♥ AK7652</p> <p>♦ A</p> <p>♣ KQ</p>		<p>South</p> <p>♠ A653</p> <p>♥ 8</p> <p>♦ Q873</p> <p>♣ 6532</p>

When you pick up your hand here it looks rather pathetic, and you might expect to play little but a walk-on part in the show.

Oh no! You are about to be the star of the production. Are your skills up to it?

As time goes by, you will more and more come to appreciate the 4-4 trump fit, even over the 5-3. You have more flexibility in your play, since either hand can be the "master hand."

West leads the ♣J, the only attractive lead he has, and we go into the Think Tank to **plan**.

We have a losing Club, losing Diamonds we'd just like to throw on the floor, and to those who don't get the value of the power of a long suit in dummy...it could be a fearful place to be. Also, the winners are a little on the thin side. Try counting them – four Spades, two Hearts, the ♦A and a Club. You might make a ruff or two as well but that's still some way short of twelve.

However... we are going to make those Hearts the place to **dump** all our losers. Unlike the other hands, though, we've got a little twist. It's not entries to the dummy we lack, but entries to our hand.

We know we expect to get a 4-2 split in Hearts, and there are a lot of high Hearts out against us. We are going to need to keep that ♥K in dummy rather than cash it early.

Another point to be considered (will they never end?) is the trump split. A huge majority of the time (68% if you please!) you will get a 3-2 split. That means 32% of the time they won't split 3-2

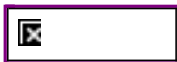
and it is prudent to cater for that if you can. You've got all the top Spades, so you shouldn't be over-ruffed. It will be important to pull them all though, before cashing those handy-dandy Hearts.

As before, we tackle our suit to be ruffed out immediately, and – as before – we use our trumps as our means of communication between our two hands. The beauty of that is that we are pulling the opponent's teeth while we do it. Fun fun fun.

So, in detail, here is the (elegant) solution to the problem. West leads the ♣J to the ♣A and East, with nothing much else to do, plays back a trump. We win that in dummy and immediately play off the ♥A and ruff a Heart low. A trump to dummy is followed by another Heart, this time ruffed with the ♠A (no chance of anyone over-ruffing **that!**) By now, dummy is actually high as all the Hearts are good. We can simply draw the remaining trumps and claim the balance.

Note that by keeping that ♥K in dummy, we had a high card with which to pull East's last Heart. Had we cashed it early, West would have made a trump trick (or East would have made a Heart trick). You don't believe us? Get out a pack of cards and try it out!

Don't get too comfortable. You've got one more hand.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit SA	Contract: 5H
Date: 17/06/2014	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

West	North	East	South
-	-	1♦	1♥
1♠	3♥	3♣	4♥
4♠	5♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ K

This sort of auction – a free-for-all – often lands declarer a level or so higher than the comfort zone. Here 4♥ would be easy (and 4♠ easy to defeat with Diamond ruffs) but here you are, as South, pushed to the uncomfortable heights of the five-level.

It was a stimulating auction, to say the least, whether it was well-judged is quite a different matter. Everyone had something to say, but our partner, bless him or curse him, prevailed. He, with shortness in the opponents' suit, and three honors in our trumps, kept going. We bet in the back of his mind, he knew we could make something of those Clubs. He knows as well as we do, that a long suit in dummy is money in the bank (especially with those trump entries).

On the sight of dummy we must **Count** and **Plan**. This reveals that the Clubs are our only realistic hope. (Ruffing Diamonds on table is a possible line but it actually fails because, eventually, West would make the ♥J). To make use of the Clubs we probably need a 3-2 split, although we might survive a 4-1 break.

So, the play in detail... Win the Spade lead and immediately lead a Club. Although there appears to be a guess (should we try dummy's ♣K or ♣J or run the ♣9?) there is nothing to guess on this layout. East wins the Club, plays a Spade to West and that player exits with a Diamond.

So now we are back in the old routine... A Heart to dummy, *ruff a Club in hand*. A trump to dummy, *ruff a Club in hand*. By now all the Clubs in dummy are winners so all that remains is to cross to dummy with the ♥10 (either by leading a Heart or by ruffing a Diamond) and chucking any remaining losers on the long Clubs.

Let's summarize what we've learned in these two series. There are basically only two ways to get rid of losers: We can **trump** them in dummy when we have shortness in dummy. Or we can **dump** them in dummy when dummy has a long suit. That long suit on table may need **ruffing out** to establish it.

North
 ♠ 52
 ♥ AQT
 ♦ 5
 ♣ KJ76532

West
 ♠ KQT86
 ♥ J5
 ♦ JT76
 ♣ 84



East
 ♠ J973
 ♥ 8
 ♦ KQ943
 ♣ AQT

South
 ♠ A4
 ♥ K976432
 ♦ A82
 ♣ 9

This deal is your final challenge.

After a fiercely competitive auction you end up in an uncomfortable spot. Uncomfortable or not, partner is banking on your card-play skills to bring home the required number of tricks.

Remember: **No long suit in dummy should ever be ignored.**

Once you have identified your dumping spot, you need to make sure you've protected your **entries**. If you can't get to dummy you aren't going to be able to ruff out the side-suit.