

## §6: Suit combinations.

Almost all hands in all forms of bridge contain *suit combinations*. A suit combination is just the way a suit may be distributed between two hands. It is rare, in fact, that a suit is dealt between two hands so that all the high cards are in one hand. This example, however, is where all the high cards are in one hand:

♣ 4 3 2
Dummy W E Declarer
♣ A K Q J 10

Here, it should be easy to see that there are five tricks in Clubs. Because all of South's Clubs are *equals* it doesn't matter in which order South plays them. Change the cards around a little, however, so that the high ones are not in the same hand:

♣ J 10 2
Dummy W E Declarer
♣ A K Q 4 3

Here there are also five *cashable* tricks in this suit.

### STOP!

Can you see that this is so? Please note that there is a correct way to play this suit and, naturally enough, an incorrect way. You should lead a *low* card (the ♣3 or the ♣4) to North's ♣10 or ♣J, play off the other Club honour in the North hand and then lead the ♣2 to the ♣Q. What would happen if you don't do this?

What happens if you lead the three top Clubs from South? Can you see that this play will *crash* the Club honours?

Can you see *why* this might matter?

*Crashing honours* is, generally speaking, a very bad idea. It happens when declarer takes his eye off the ball and plays two high cards to the same trick. Another (frequent) example happens in a suit layout like the following:

♣ K 5 4
Dummy W E Declarer
♣ A Q J 3

Here, an inattentive declarer (South in this example) plays off the ♣J and ♣Q as his first two plays in the suit. Now, suddenly, he is on the horns of a dilemma as the remaining cards are:

♣ K
Dummy W E Declarer
♣ A 3

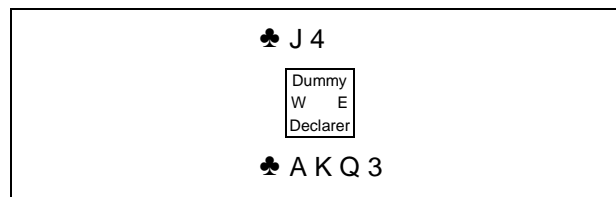
If South now plays the ♣A he *crashes* the ♣A and ♣K on the same trick, with no guarantee that the ♣3 will be the boss Club. On the other hand, if South leads the ♣3 to the ♣K the lead

is with North and the ♣A is with South. In many deals the ♣A will be stranded and may never make a trick.

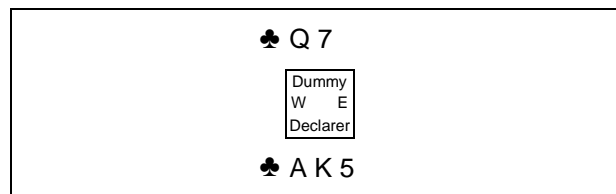
Correct technique is to play the ♣K first and then a low Club to South's remaining ♣A Q J. Then four Club tricks are easy.

With this idea in mind can you play the following combinations correctly so that you make the stipulated number of tricks? Assume that the first lead comes from the South hand.

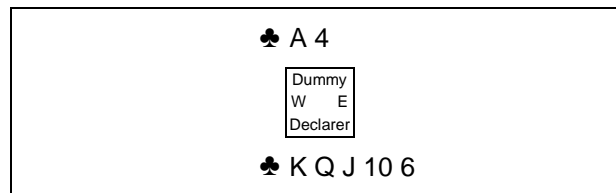
1: Make four tricks from this holding:



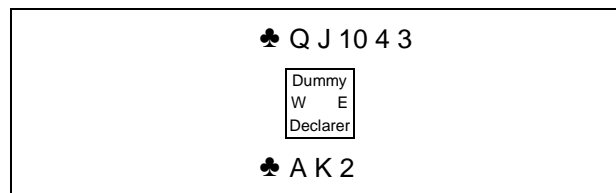
2: Make three tricks from this holding:



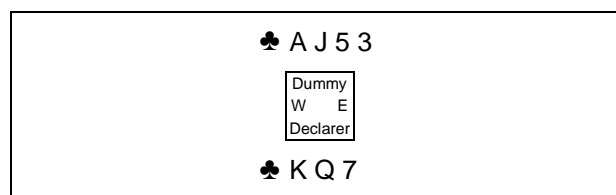
3: Make five tricks from this holding:



4: Make five tricks from this holding:



5: Make four tricks from this holding:



6: Can you see a guiding principle here in these *suit combinations*?

### Answers.

1: Lead the ♣3 to the ♣J and then lead back the ♣4 to South's remaining ♣A K Q.

2: Lead the ♣5 first (playing North's ♣Q) and follow with the ♣7 to South's remaining ♣A K.

3: Lead the ♣6 first to the ♣A in the North hand and lead back the ♣4 to South's remaining ♣K Q J 10.

4: Lead the ♣A first, follow that by cashing the ♣K. Now lead the ♣2 to North's remaining ♣Q J 10.

5: Lead the ♣K first, follow that by cashing the ♣Q. Now lead the ♣7 to North's remaining ♣A J.

6: It is *generally* right to play the **high cards from the short suit first**.

In the eight hands that follow the emphasis is on "*Play the high cards from the short suit first*".

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