




This first series of six is all about ruffing out dummy's long suit for extra tricks. Easy examples (2402 has the harder ones)

VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 1
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: None
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North	
	♠ J62	
	♥ QJ9	
	♦ A8654	
	♣ A3	
West		East
♠ AKQ		♠ 8543
♥ 5		♥ 743
♦ JT73		♦ Q9
♣ 98752		♣ KQ64
	South	
	♠ T97	
	♥ AKT862	
	♦ K2	
	♣ JT	

In this series, you're going to learn a magic trick – how to create tricks where none seem to exist. You will also violate one of the "rules" that you will have been taught earlier. Well, that's life.

Part of this magic trick (called *ruffing out a suit*) is an understanding of how suits split. Now, we could give you all sorts of percentages and statistical tables, but let's make it very simple. If an *Odd* number of cards is out against you, you are likely to get a favourable split. For example, if the opponents have five cards against you, you will get a 3-2 split most of the time.

If an *Even* number of cards are out against you, you are likely to get an uneven split. As an example, if the opponents have four cards out against you, most often you will get a 3-1 break.

Bear that in mind as we get to work on Hand 1. Where is the elusive extra trick coming from here?

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

Lead: ♠ A

We end up in 4♥ after we push a little in the auction (overbidding is not yet a crime – at least not in most countries) and West attacks that with the ♠A lead.

At first glance it looks as though we may have bitten off more than we can chew with our ambitious 4♥ bid. There are, after all, four obvious losers (three immediate Spade losers and a slow Club loser).

Our count of winners shows we've got nine of those, but our four prospective losers requires a very clever line of play. The mantra that you might like to chant during this series is this: **No long suit in dummy should ever be ignored.** So, here, we must look to the Diamonds.

We are holding seven cards in that suit, so the opponent's Diamonds are likely to break 4-2 (an even number against you usually gives an uneven split). We can **set up** the fifth Diamond in dummy, but we are going to have to be very wily about entries. Our only entries to the dummy are in trumps, so it will be important to not **block** the suit.

After we cash our ♦K and ♦A, we play a Diamond back to hand to ruff. If we were to ruff with a tiny one, we could end up trapped in our hand, so we show some style and ruff with the ♥A. Then back and forth between dummy and the closed hand a couple times, always ruffing high in hand, until finally we have established dummy's ♦8 as a winner.

Did you notice that it was also important to be sure we pulled all the trumps before playing dummy's winning Diamond? Did you also notice that we got the expected 3-1 trump split? (They had an even number of Hearts – four – so they were due to split unevenly).

Now, we need to be clear about this piece of card-play technique. Normally speaking it is poor play to ruff dummy's losers in the closed hand. Why? Because you don't make any extra tricks that way – usually declarer's hand has more trumps than dummy. Most of the time it is correct play to try to ruff losers in the dummy, *in the short trump hand*.

So why break the rule here? Why *ruff in the long hand*? The answer here is that ruffing Diamonds in your hand does not, by itself, generate any more tricks (you have six Heart tricks anyway). You are, however, *ruffing out a long suit*. Setting up a long suit by this means is the theme of these deals.


When you are ready, try Hand 2.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 2
Dealer: East	Vulnerable: N / S
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North	
	♠ A7652	
	♥ QJT	
	♦ A83	
	♣ Q9	
West		East
♠ T8		♠ KQ94
♥ 643		♥ 5
♦ JT9		♦ Q652
♣ AKT53		♣ 8762
	South	
	♠ J3	
	♥ AK9872	
	♦ K74	
	♣ J4	

Can you repeat the technique? The principle is to establish suits by **ruffing them out**.

Where is your extra trick coming from here?

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

Lead: ♣ A

We arrive in 4♥ after we open 1♥ and rebid 2♥ to show a minimum opener with long Hearts. North raises that to game.

The opening lead of the ♣A gives us two quick losers in Clubs, and an initial **Count** shows two more lurking below our ♠A and ♦A K. So we have four apparent losers. In terms of winners there are nine obvious ones – one Spade, six Hearts and the ♦A K.

There is only one clear path to victory, as there are no distracting finesses. Our only hope is to **ruff out** dummy's five-card Spade suit. We know that six cards in the opponents' hands will usually deliver a 4-2 split, although a less likely 3-3 split will be just as welcome.


The defenders cash two top Clubs and switch to a Diamond. We take that in hand with the ♦K and must start on the Spades; playing the ♠A and another is as good a play as any. East takes that and decides to lead trumps to cut down on entries to dummy. Nice try, no cigar.

You take the Heart lead on table and ruff a Spade (all your trumps are "high" so any will do. Try the ♥A for style points) and note that Spades are breaking 4-2. Now you can cross to the table with another Heart (noting the 3-1 trump break) and ruff another Spade in hand. The upshot of all of this is to establish dummy's ♠7 as a winner. Crossing to the ♥Q has the twin effect of drawing the last trump while providing access to the winning Spade. Away goes the losing Diamond and all that remains is the scoring up.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 3
Dealer: South	Vulnerable: E / W
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North	
	♠ J63	
	♥ Q64	
	♦ T8	
	♣ AK764	
West		East
♠ T985		♠ KQ7
♥ 3		♥ 852
♦ AK943		♦ 7652
♣ 952		♣ QT8
	South	
	♠ A42	
	♥ AKJT97	
	♦ QJ	
	♣ J3	

Sometimes the stars are in alignment, and something good happens.

Usually it's because we did something good, although, as this hand will show, sometimes it's just down to sheer good fortune.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
P	2♣	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ A

We reach 4♥ on this deal and West cashes the top two Diamonds before switching to a Spade.

A word about the bidding. After 1♥ – 2♣ our 3♥ rebid might appear a tad aggressive with those uncertain values in the minors, but we can justify it. 2♥ with 16 points would be too chicken-hearted and we might miss an easy game. True, it is hard to value something like ♦Q J alone – are they really worth 3 points? – but you just have to bid the hand that you can see.

As it happened, partner has a Heart fit and takes us to game. Without a heart fit it is still possible that he would have had the cards for 3NT (where the ♦Q J might actually have proved of some use).

Anyway, in the actual event dummy proves to have some annoying duplication – three Spades opposite three and two Diamonds opposite two. In general this is bad news. On the other hand, the ♥Q and the ♣A K are all valuable cards.

We perform the usual pre-play thinking, involving **Counting** and **Planning**. With four losers, we are in trouble. The good news is that our Spade losers are slow, so we can find a solution before we go down.

Our **plan** takes advantage of the five-card suit in dummy. (Once again: **No long suit in dummy should ever be ignored**). Unlike the last hand though, entries to the table are a problem.

Outside of the Clubs themselves, our only entry to the table is the ♥Q. Two good things are going to have to happen: We need a 3-3 Club split and a 3-1 trump split. We expect the trumps to break 3-1, but the Club split doesn't have such favourable odds. (36% if you are really interested. It's still 36% if you are **not** interested...)

One thing we have learned in our bridge education is that if the only way a contract can make is if we get a break (or find a

card in a certain hand), we have to play the cards that way. What must be, must be.

West takes his ♦A K and switches to the ♠10. We grab that with the ♣A, and attack the Clubs at once, cashing our ♣A K. Then we play a third round of clubs, ruffing high in hand.

When West plays a Club to the trick, we know we got our 3-3 split and say a silent prayer of thanks to the bridge gods. We then finish pulling trumps, being sure to end on the table, toss those hideous losing Spades onto our beautiful winning Clubs, and actually make an overtrick!


No time to preen yourself. Next deal.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ KQ862		
	♥ J74		
	♦ QJ		
	♣ A74		
West		East	
♠ J954		♠ T7	
♥ 82		♥ 653	
♦ KT8		♦ A7652	
♣ KQJ9		♣ 632	
	South		
	♠ A3		
	♥ AKQT9		
	♦ 943		
	♣ T85		

Another day, another deal and another case of seeing too many losers. How can you rid yourself of one (or more!) of them?

Be careful, here. You need to take advantage of good breaks and be wary of bad ones.

West	North	East	South
P	1♠	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ K

You arrive in 4♠ after North opens 1♠ and raises your 2♥ response to 3♥. Advancing to game on your cards is obvious, even though you can see a lot of potential losers in Clubs and Diamonds. West has an obvious lead of the ♣K.

Dummy is displayed and you can see that North has little to spare for his opening bid. A count of winners and losers shows there to be insufficient winners (just the nine) and too many losers (four – two Diamonds and two Clubs). Well, we know by now that the only two ways of eradicating losers are to **trump** them or to **dump** them.

A passing thought may be to trump a losing Diamond in dummy (in the *short trump hand*) but that plan would prove nugatory. As soon as you give up the lead to a high Diamond the opponents would have two Clubs and two Diamond winners to take. Cashing the ♠A K Q early is also pointless. For that to work Spades would have to break 3-3. If they are, we have **eleven** top tricks by simply drawing trumps and running the Spades.

This deal requires clear thinking and accurate play. If trumps are 3-2 and Spades 4-2 (the most probable breaks) we can set up a fifth Spade and reach it with the ♥J. To this end we cash the ♥A K (are trumps 3-2? **Yes!**) Now we play off the ♠A K and ruff a **low** Spade in hand. This gives up the chance of an overtrick should Spades be 3-3 but it significantly increases the chances of making ten tricks.

After we ruff the Spade in hand we can return to the ♥J (drawing the last trump) and make the remaining Spade winners on table for the contract. There are still three losers but we can throw these scraps to the dogs.


Now, why cash the ♥A K early? Well, if trumps had been 4-1 (or even 5-0) we'd have needed Spades to break 3-3. Why? Because we'd have been unable to ruff them out and get back to dummy having drawn trumps. So if a defender had discarded on the second Heart we'd have drawn trumps and hoped Spades behaved.



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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 5
Dealer: North	Vulnerable: N / S
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North		
	♠ AJ9		
	♥ AJ7532		
	♦ Q9		
	♣ 53		
West		East	
♠ 2		♠ 653	
♥ T98		♥ KQ6	
♦ AK764		♦ 8532	
♣ AQT2		♣ 764	
	South		
	♠ KQT874		
	♥ 4		
	♦ JT		
	♣ KJ98		

This deal is living proof that long suits are like money in the bank. As before, entries will be the key to success.

Handling the trump suit wrongly would lead to defeat. You have been warned!

West	North	East	South
-	1♥	P	1♠
X	2♥	P	3♠
P	4♠	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ A

Here we've got two distributional hands, and just like in real life, different long suits in each hand.

As South we arrive in 4♠ after West has shown that he holds most of the missing high cards. During the auction, when North realises how valuable his Spades are, he makes what initially seems like an aggressive game bid. We'd like to think, however, that he realises the value of his long Heart suit in a dummy chock-full of trumps as *entries*.

As declarer, after we do our **Count**, we know we've got some problems. West's take-out Double has made our Club suit very vulnerable to attack, and pretty much wiped out our hopes of using a finesse as a solution to our fourth loser.

But (you know the song by now), "**No long suit in dummy should ever be ignored.**" The opponents have six Hearts, so there's a chance we can set up dummy's Hearts. We see though that we're going to have to get back to the dummy several times to lead them. Our means of communication is via the trump suit. We are going to return to the table and pull trumps at the same time.

We must be careful to preserve **low** trumps in our hand to be overtaken in dummy. That means when we ruff a Heart in the closed hand, we are going to do it **high**, and save our low trumps to get back to dummy. This makes sense, we hope...

So... After the Heart switch at trick three we take the ♥A, ruff a Heart, cross to a trump, ruff a Heart and note that dummy's Hearts are all winners. Now we can draw trumps (finishing in dummy, of course) and pitch Clubs on the winning Hearts.

Hearts have to break 3-3 for 4♠ to make, by the way. This way we get enough discards in the closed hand to throw three Clubs away. Sure, we could have *ruffed out* the Heart suit had they broken 4-2 but we would have been left with the ♣K J in hand and would have needed the Club

finesse.

All our planning and care are rewarded when the plan comes together. Another success. Don't get over-confident though. More is coming.






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VB#15 Y2 Setting up a side-suit Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H By: South
Date: 07/10/2015	Board #: 6
Dealer: East	Vulnerable: E / W
<a href="#">Play this hand online!</a>	

	North	
	♠ J7642	
	♥ T9	
	♦ A65	
	♣ A52	
West		East
♠ 98		♠ KQT5
♥ 7653		♥ 8
♦ Q94		♦ K872
♣ KQT9		♣ 7643
	South	
	♠ A3	
	♥ AKQJ42	
	♦ JT3	
	♣ J8	

Here you have a decent hand and must find a way to show it.

Unfortunately, you are propelled into the wrong contract – can you still make it?

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

Lead: ♣ K

On this deal you open 1♥ and rebid 3♥ to suggest a strong six-card suit and a decent hand, round about the 16 point mark. Partner (holding two Aces) is fully justified in going on to game and 4♥ is a perfectly sensible bid. Unfortunately for your side, 3NT is easy to make (six Heart tricks and three Aces) and 4♥ is more tricky. *'Twas ever thus.*

West attacks your contract with the ♣K lead (normal enough from near sequences such as ♣K Q 10) and you count your losers. Unfortunately, you can see four of them – one Spade, two Diamonds and a Club. Irritating. How can you eliminate a loser?

Please note that Diamonds are a "frozen suit". That is: you cannot make two tricks if you were to lead them. However, if either defender opened them up then you could make two tricks there with correct play. It's an instructive layout. No one should touch Diamonds – they should wait for an opponent to make the first move.

Back to the plot. You take the ♣K with the ♣A and, remembering that even feeble five-card suits should not be ignored, immediately play off the ♣A and another Spade. West cashes the ♣Q and, in an attempt to remove entries to dummy, plays a trump. Well defended, but not quite good enough. You take this on table with the ♥9, ruff a Spade (high, of course) cross to the ♥10 and ruff another Spade.

Ruffing Spades in the *long trump hand* by itself generates no extra trump tricks (six Hearts were always yours for the taking). However, this plan of repeatedly trumping Spades in hand has the effect of setting up the ♠J as a winner. To finish off the hand you draw the last two trumps, cross to the ♦A and pitch a losing Diamond on the master Spade.

Game, set and match to the good guys.