

Declarer Play Technique

By

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Here is a new article, based on a deal from the Unit 181 Nov 12, 2022 CNTC qualifying – Board 5:

Contract: 4♥		♠	A K 2		
By North		♥	A Q 10 4		
Scoring: IMPs		♦	9 2		
Lead: 9♠		♣	K 10 9 4		
♠		N W E S		♠	
♥				♥	
♦				♦	
♣				♣	
		♠	4		
		♥	K J 9 7 2		
		♦	A 10 6 3		
		♣	7 6 2		

All pairs should reach 4♥. The recommended auction is 1NT – 2♦ (transfer) – 2♥ - 2NT (invitational) – 4♥. Note that South should not rebid 3♦ over 2♥, as that is game forcing, where you only want to invite game. Not inviting game is too meek.

Some declarers made this contract, some didn't. Here is what you should be thinking and doing.

The play

You have eight top tricks. The best road to 10 tricks is ruffing two diamonds in dummy. However before you embark on this line, you need to plan your play, and especially your entries. Unless you do, your odds of success are poor.

The key play is to give up a diamond early. The reasons are twofold:

1. You keep the ace of diamonds as an entry for one diamond ruff, and
2. You give up a diamond trick early, before the opponents know your weakness.

Win the spade and lead the 9♦ from dummy, playing the three from your hand. If the opponents do not shift to a club through the king you are home. Let, say they continue spades. Win, discarding a club from dummy. Play a 2nd round of diamonds to the ace, ruff a diamond with the A♥, and then lead the 4♥ to dummy's nine (both opponents following, ruff the 10♦ with the Q♥, then lead the 10♥ overtaking with dummy's jack, pull the last trump, and lead up to the club king for an overtrick. The full deal:

Contract: 4♥		♠	A K 2		
Scoring: IMPs		♥	A Q 10 4		
Lead: spade.		♦	9 2		
		♣	K 10 9 4		
♠	Q J 10 6 5	N W E S		♠	9 8 7 3
♥	5 3 2			♥	J
♦	J 7 5			♦	K Q 8 4
♣	4 3			♣	A Q J 8
Lead: 6♠		♠	4		
		♥	K J 9 7 2		
		♦	A 10 6 3		
		♣	7 6 2		

Moral of the Story

- On some hands it is necessary to pull trumps first, but not always. Had you pulled trumps on the above deal, reasonable defense will limit you to nine tricks.
- Look to take advantage of when you have all the high spots in a suit, like the heart suit on this deal.
- Your lack of entries in one hand, versus the other, may determine the best line of play.

- An expert technique is establishing or maximizing the communication between your hand and dummy (or in other cases, minimizing the communication between the two defenders). This is done in several ways. One example is not taking your diamond ace on the first round of the suit here, or leading a singleton, and then using ruffs in that suit as entries.