

vulnerable.

A declarer play challenge, after South opened 1♠.

Would you have opened 1♠? I would pass, not because of weak spades but because tight KQ holdings are often worth less than five points. I would open 1♠ if my hearts were ♥A2 rather than ♥KQ. Say you open 1♠, which is fine, North tries for 7♠ before bidding 6♠.

♠ AKQJ
♥ 76543
♦ K2
♣ A3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 75432
♥ KQ
♦ AQ6
♣ 864

South to make 6♠, West leads ♦3.

In a suit contract South counts and plans to reduce their losers.

1st Step: Losers from South, 1♥+2♣ = 3

2nd Step: Reduce losers by? Discard ♣3 on the third round of ♦s and then ruff two ♣s in North.

3rd Step: Your plan. If trumps divide 2-2 (40%) this plan succeeds but if trumps divide 3-1 South is defeated as EW's 3rd ♠ will be higher than South's ♠7. And if South plays three rounds of trumps they have only one trump left to ruff two ♣s.

If only South held ♠10 (after ruffing two clubs in North, South draws EW's last trump with ♠10 if trumps broke 3-1). Is there another plan to rid South of their club losers?

Yes, establish North's heart suit by ruffing and then discard clubs on winning hearts. How? South preserves North's entries so they can ruff good and later reach winning hearts. To grab this extra chance, start establishing hearts before playing trumps, South needs all of North's high trumps as entries to access hearts. Let's give this plan a go:

Trick 1: ♦3, ♦2, ♦J, win ♦Q. Save ♦K in case it's needed as an entry.

Trick 2: ♥K, ♥A, ♥3, ♥8. Lead ♥K now. Start unblocking ♥KQ tight.

Trick 3: ♣Q, ♣A, ♣10, ♣4. West attacks ♣s exposing a ♣ loser.

Trick 4: ♥4, ♥9, ♥Q, ♥2. Unblock ♥Q so can ruff ♥s.

The hands are now:

♠ AKQJ
♥ 765
♦ K
♣ 3

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 75432
♥ -
♦ A6
♣ 86

Now is the time to draw trumps. After drawing trumps South has ♦K entry to return to North for the hearts. Tricks 5, 6, 7: Play ♠A, ♠K and ♠Q, as East turns up with three trumps South needs to play three rounds. If trumps turn out to be 2-2, South stops after only two rounds and as per the original plan, ruffs two clubs in North.

Trick 8: ♥5, ♥J, ♠5, ♥10. Ruff ♥5, ♥s divide 3-3 North's ♥76 are high.
Trick 9: ♦6, ♦8, ♦K, ♦4. Reach North with the preserved ♦K entry.

North's ♥7 and ♥6 are winners so South claims the remaining tricks (pitching ♣8 and ♣6). If hearts had divided 4-2, South ruffs ♥6 (the ♥7 is now high), cashes ♦A discarding ♣3, and claims the last two tricks with ♠J and ♥7.

Club Results: All Souths prayed that trumps (♠) would divide 2-2 and they could make 12 tricks by ruffing two losing clubs in North. But they all made just 11 tricks including the five Souths in 6♠.

Our South more than doubled their chance of success by unblocking hearts before leading trumps, and by keeping as many entries as possible (♦K) in North so that they could reach and cash high hearts after they eventually drew trumps.

The EW hands were:

West: ♠8 ♥A102 ♦1083 ♣QJ9752

East: ♠1096 ♥J98 ♦J9754 ♣K10