

USING COUNT TO CUT A LONG SUIT OFF IN DUMMY

Dealer: E Vul: Nil

	♠ J74	
	♥ Q92	
	♦ J104	
	♣ K1086	
♠ 32		♠ AKQ1098
♥ J5		♥ A43
♦ KQ862		♦ 95
♣ J543		♣ A2
	♠ 65	
	♥ K10876	
	♦ A73	
	♣ Q97	

E	S	W	N
1S	P	1NT	P
4S	P	P	P

The 4S rebid is a little pushy, but you do have what looks like 8 clear tricks and the spade suit looks self-supporting

South found the fine opening lead of a small trump. When you are on opening lead and are leading around into a big hand, it's often a good idea not to lead away from honours by themselves as you are likely to finesse yourself. With honours in all the side suits, trumps seemed the choice here.

East has 4 losers – 2 hearts, a diamond and a club. If East is allowed to ruff a heart in dummy, they will make their contract. The trump lead has started to prevent this by removing dummy's trumps.

East led a small heart to the J and North's Q, and North returned a trump to prevent any ruffing. East drew the final trump and led D5.

A new danger has emerged – if declarer can get those diamonds running, they can throw their losers away. South needs to know how many diamonds declarer has so he can take his ace at the right moment and cut declarer off from dummy. The only way to be sure is to use COUNT SIGNALS when following suit to declarer's leads.

If you are playing LOW ENCOURAGE: You play low- high to show an even number of cards, and You play high-low to show an odd number of cards.

If you are playing HIGH ENCOURAGE: You play high-low to show an even number of cards, and You play low-high to show an odd number of cards.

NS were playing low encourage. On the D5 lead, South played D7 (reverse showing an odd number), West DK and North played an emphatic DJ.

When South saw the DJ, he knew it was either a singleton (giving East 4 diamonds and it doesn't matter when he takes the DA) or North is showing an odd number of diamonds. It couldn't be 5, as East would be void, so 3 diamonds was the only other possibility.

East went back to the hand with HA and led another diamond.

If North started with 3 diamonds, East started with 2 and South must take the DA on the second round to cut declarer off from dummy. East now loses 2 hearts, DA and a club and goes one down.

Here is another example of the importance of giving count, this board was played at our club a week ago.

BOARD 18									
BD: 18	♠ AKQ				Dir: E				
	♥ KT7				Vul: NS				
	♦ AQ5								
	♣ AK64								
♠ JT42					♠ 9873				
♥ A92					♥ 43				
♦ J84					♦ K7				
♣ J98					♣ QT532				
	♠ 65								
	♥ QJ865								
	♦ T9632								
	♣ 7								
	♣	♦	♥	♠					
N	2	5	5	2	3			25	
S	2	5	5	2	3		7		5
E	-	-	-	-	-			3	
W	-	-	-	-	-				

I was sitting east and our opponents ended in 3NT by north, after a few rounds of play a low heart was led by north and here it was obvious the ace was with west, important for me to tell my partner how

many hearts I had so he knew how many rounds to hold up for, I incorrectly played the 3, which my partner interpreted as an odd number of cards so thought north only had 2 hearts, (thinking I had 3) played his ace accordingly and they ended up with 10 tricks and a top board for them 😞