

Side-Suits First

By Brian Gunnell

Board 9
North Deals
E-W Vul

<p>♠ Q 5 3 2 ♥ K 8 3 2 ♦ Q 4 ♣ Q 10 2</p>	<p>♠ J 7 4 ♥ A 9 7 6 5 ♦ 9 2 ♣ A K J</p>	<p>♠ A K 10 9 8 6 ♥ Q 4 ♦ K 10 7 5 3 ♣ —</p>	<p>♠ — ♥ J 10 ♦ A J 8 6 ♣ 9 8 7 6 5 4 3</p>
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	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>	<i>South</i>
		1 ♥	1 ♠	2 ♣
		3 ♣	4 ♠	5 ♣
	2 ♠ Dbl	All pass		

5 ♣ x by South
Lead: ♠ 2

With extreme distribution around the table (or at least in the South-East corner), it's not unusual for the bidding to keep on going until someone finally says, "Enough already, I double you!" Here, West questions South's ability to make eleven tricks in clubs.

After ruffing the opening Spade lead, one (faulty) plan would be to ruff a couple of diamonds, but that would set up a natural trump trick for the defense (two, as it happens, because the suit splits 3-0). The winning plan is to set up the hearts, and some trumps must be kept in reserve in order to provide dummy entries later in the play. It's OK to play a trump to the ace at trick two, and then the play continues: spade ruff; ♥J losing to East's queen; diamond shift won by the ace; ♥10 is run around; club to dummy; ♥A is cashed (pitching a diamond); heart ruff; club back to the board. Now another diamond is pitched on the long heart and declarer has eleven tricks (seven trumps, three hearts and the ♦A). Not a difficult hand for those who didn't use up dummy's trumps before tackling hearts.

Anyone for four spades? Yes, that's another contract where it doesn't pay to draw trumps immediately. In this case it is the diamonds which must be established early, and declarer goes down if he ruffs the opening club lead and then draws three rounds of trumps. Instead the play goes: club ruff; ♠A; diamond to the queen; heart to the queen; lose a diamond. Now declarer is in control and loses just two red aces and a diamond overruff.