

Suit Contract Play – Developing Side Suits

Great play of the hand starts with planning your play at trick one. After counting/identifying your losers in the main hand, you should look for ways eliminate them. One way to do this is to develop side suits and pitch losers on them. Here is an example:

Contract: 4 ♠ by South

♠ A Q 5 3
♥ J 10 9 7 2
♦ K 6 5
♣ 10

♠ 8 7
♥ 8 6
♦ Q 10 7 2
♣ A Q J 6 4



♠ J 6
♥ A 5 4
♦ J 4 3
♣ 9 8 7 3 2

♠ K 10 9 4 2
♥ K Q 3
♦ A 9 8
♣ K 5

Lead: ♦2

With South as the main hand, you have 4 losers (1 heart, 1 diamond and 2 clubs). We always lose the heart and club aces on best defense but we can ruff the second club even after drawing trump. How about the diamond loser? No finesses possible and we cannot ruff because both hands have 3 cards. The only way to avoid a diamond loser is to pitch it on our side suit hearts. Once we push out the ♥A, we can run the suit and pitch our losing diamond.

Developing side suits by Ruffing - Sometimes to develop a side suit you may need to ruff:

Contract: 4 ♠ by South

♠ A Q 3
♥ K 10 9 7 2
♦ K 6 5
♣ 10 7

♠ 8 5
♥ Q 8 6
♦ Q 10 7 2
♣ A Q J 4



♠ J 7 6
♥ J 5 4
♦ J 4 3
♣ 9 8 3 2

♠ K 10 9 4 2
♥ A 3
♦ A 9 8
♣ K 6 5

Lead: ♦2

On this deal South is the main hand with 4 losers (1 diamond, 3 clubs). Again we have a side suit we can develop (hearts) but to do so without additional losers we need to ruff. We can do this by playing the ace first, then a heart to the king and finally ruffing a heart in the South hand. When we see hearts breaking 3-3 we know we can pitch both a diamond and a club loser on remaining hearts.

Suit Contract Play Exercise – Developing Side Suits

For the following hands identify: The main hand, number of losers, and the side suit to develop to pitch losers.

Hand #1 – Contract: 6♥ by West

♠ Q 4 3		♠ A J 10 9 2
♥ A Q J 10 6		♥ K 5 4
♦ K 4		♦ A 5 3
♣ A Q 7		♣ 8 4

Hand #2 - Contract: 4♠

♠ K 7 6 3		♠ A J 9 2
♥ K 6		♥ A 8 4
♦ K Q J 10		♦ 7 2
♣ A K 3		♣ 8 6 5 2

Hand #3- Contract: 4♥

♠ 6 4 3		♠ A 2
♥ A K 9 6 2		♥ 8 4 3
♦ K 6		♦ A Q J 10
♣ A 9 7		♣ K 8 4 2

Answers:

Hand #1: West is the main hand with 5 trumps. West has 3 losers (1S, 2C). You have a spade side suit you can develop and pitch both club losers so there is no need to finesse clubs. Draw trump and run the ♠Q through to finesse for the ♠K. If the finesse is on you make 7♥, otherwise 6♥.

Hand #2: With 4-4 trumps either can be the main hand but we choose East with better trumps. With East as the main hand we have 4 losers (1S, 1H, 1D, 2C). The side suit to develop is diamonds. Plan to draw trump ♠K first then finessing for the ♠Q. Then run diamonds pushing out the ♦A. After this you can pitch your losing clubs on winning diamonds.

Hand #3: West is the main hand with 5 trumps. West has 4 losers (2S, 1H, 1C). West has a diamond suit to pitch losers. Best play is to draw two rounds of trump (assuming 3-2 break) and then run diamonds pitching a spade and a club loser.