

Establishing a long suit

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Overtricks win matchpoints, so at our club sessions, you should always be on the lookout for opportunities to develop an overtrick or two. With that in mind, how would you play 4H from the East hand on the lead of a low diamond? North plays the ace and you ruff.

♠A762	♠K98
♥QJ92	♥A7643
♦J82	♦
♣AQ	♣K9876

As always, you need to count your winners and losers, then develop a plan for the play. Of course you are going to finesse in hearts and hope for a 2-2 break. That alone would be worth 10 tricks. Two more diamond ruffs in hand would get you up to 12 tricks, but you would still have a spade loser. Can you improve on that?

Indeed you can. Cross to dummy with a top club, take the successful heart finesse and draw another round of trumps. Now cash the other top club in dummy and when everyone follows, ruff a diamond and ruff a club. Ruff the last diamond back to hand and you can cash ♣K and the established fifth club to discard 2 spades from dummy! That allows you ruff your spade loser and make 13 tricks – see the full deal below:

BD: 16	♠QT3	Dlr: W		
	♥KT	Vul: EW		
	♦AQ76			
	♣T543			
♠A762		♠K98		
♥QJ92		♥A7643		
♦J82		♦		
♣AQ		♣K9876		
	♠J54			
	♥85			
	♦KT9543			
	♣J2			
	♣ ♦ ♥ ♠	N		
		T		
N	1		11	
S	1		14	10
E	5	7 5	1	5
W	5	7 5	1	

This was played on Saturday 9 November. Although almost everyone was in 4H, only Gai Ritchie timed the play successfully, which earned her a top.

Later that afternoon, another interesting deal came along. After a 1S opening by North, the auction often proceeded 1S-2C-3C-3NT, with South rather optimistically hoping for diamond stoppers in the North hand. On a heart lead, South has little choice but to take the diamond finesse – when this works, she must cash out for 9 tricks, because once the opponents get in again, it's all over.

♠JT953
♥6
♦AQ4
♣AT75

♠A
♥K87
♦9873
♣KQJ63

However, what if North-South instead choose to play in 5C? Although 3NT rules at matchpoints, at IMPs that would certainly be a better idea. On a heart lead to the ace and a spade switch which declarer wins, how should South play?

In fact this is again a deal on which declarer can establish a long suit:

BD: 24 ♠JT953 **Dlr: W**
♥6 **Vul: None**
♦AQ4
♣AT75

♠K874 ♠Q62
♥Q92 ♥AJT543
♦KJT6 ♦52
♣82 ♣94

♠A
♥K87
♦9873
♣KQJ63

♣ ♦ ♥ ♠ N
T

N	6	4	1	3	3	11	
S	6	4	1	3	3	9	7
E							13
W							

After crossing to dummy with ♣A and ruffing a spade high, South can return with ♣10 to draw trumps and ruff another spade. Now a diamond to the queen, finessing successfully, is followed by a third spade ruff, establishing the fifth spade. The losing diamond is discarded on ♥K and dummy is high. Declarer makes 12 tricks, which even at Pairs would outscore those in 3NT!

On the day, no one played in 5C. Those who played in a part-score in clubs did not find the above line, as all made 11 tricks.

Next time you are in a suit contract with enough trumps between the two hands, take a close look at the possibility of establishing an extra trick in a 5+ card side suit ...

