

MANAGING ENTRIES

Managing entries is one of the most difficult and important aspects of declarer play. It involves being in the correct hand at the right time. There is little point in setting up extra tricks if they are stranded in dummy or wanting to take a finesse but being unable to lead from the correct hand.

Playing Honours from the Short Hand

When cashing winners in a suit where one hand has more cards than the other it is important to start with the honours in the shorter hand.

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

West plays 3NT and North leads a club. South wins with the ace and returns a club. For the contract to succeed declarer must make tricks in diamonds. It is critical that they initially cash the two diamond honours in hand so that when the third honour is played they are in dummy to cash the remaining low diamonds. Cashing the ace before the king and queen would result in the diamond winners being stranded in dummy.

Establishing Long Suits

If a trick has to be lost in establishing a suit the management of entries can mean the difference between success and failure.

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

The queen of spades is led against West's 3NT contract. Declarer must establish tricks in clubs, which will involve losing a trick in that suit. They also need to maintain an entry to dummy to cash the long clubs.

It is critical that declarer wins the first trick with the king of spades. The ace must be retained as a later entry to dummy. Declarer must then cash the club ace and king (in that order) so that a third club can be led to establish the suit. When declarer retains the lead they can cross to dummy's carefully preserved ace of spades to cash the remainder of the club suit.

Overtaking

♠ K 6 5	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; gap: 10px;"> N W S </div>	♠ A 9 7
♥ A 4 3 2		♥ 10 9 5
♦ K		♦ A J 10 9 8
♣ A K 7 6 2		♣ 5 4

West is declarer in a contract of 3NT. If they cash the king of diamonds before crossing to dummy with the spade ace to continue with diamonds they will make only two tricks in the suit. They can establish extra winners but with the ace of spades gone there is no way to get to dummy to cash them. Correct play is to overtake the king of diamonds with the ace and continue the suit. The defence will win with the diamond queen, but the suit will provide four tricks because the spade ace is still there to provide access to dummy's winners.

Managing the Pips

10 9 8 3	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; justify-content: center; gap: 10px;"> N W S </div>	A K Q 6 4 2
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If declarer wants to cash six tricks in this suit they must be careful to unblock high cards from the West hand while cashing East's honours.