

The Advancing Player



Entries

By Maritha Pottenger

A good Declarer is always thinking about transportation – that is, how s/he will move from one side of the table to the other. Often, one hand (Declarer usually, but sometimes Dummy) is the much stronger hand. Winning on that side of the table will occur fairly often. It is the weaker hand that will commonly be short on entries – winners that will allow you to gain access to that side of the table for some needed finesses, or other necessary plays that are best from one side of the table, but not the other.

As Declarer, one must strive to use judiciously the entries that exist, often working to create more entries (particularly in the hand that has fewer of them). The primary tools for creating and maintaining entries are (1) ducking; (2) unblocking or overtaking; and (3) jettison plays.

When developing a long suit in a hand with few entries, ducking one round completely is often essential. For example, AKxxxx (with no outside entry) opposite xx. Duck one round completely. Then play Ace, King and hope the suit breaks 3-2. Even worse: AQxxxx opposite xx. Duck the first round completely. Then play to the Queen – hoping suit breaks 3-2 *and* the King is onside. Similarly, AQ10xx opposite Jx. Play the Jack. If it is covered by the King, *duck*. Then play Ace, Queen, etc. That way you get 4 tricks even if King is doubleton and 9xxx is on the right. (If you cover King and the suit is 4-2, you may get only 3 tricks.) Another example: KQJxx (with *one* outside entry) opposite xx. *Duck* first round completely. Then play to King and force out Ace. You have the *one* entry to get back to suit. (1st duck is guarding against the likely 4-2 break.) This is to make tricks likely. If you only need 2 tricks, play King 1st round.

Sometimes a dearth of entries requires overtaking a card. If, for example, you hold KQ opposite A98xx in a suit and dummy has only *one* outside entry, the percentage play is to play King and *overtake* Queen with the Ace. (If suit is 3-3, it doesn't matter how you play it. If suit is 4-2 and *either* the 10 or the Jack is doubleton, you can now use the 9 to force out the other honor and still have your *one* outside entry to get back to the suit.) In other cases, you may overtake (giving up a trick) because the extra entry allows you to take a key finesse (which gives 2, 3, or 4 tricks in return).

When you can take a trick in your hand or dummy, consider where you need to retain an entry for later in the hand (usually to cash long-suit winners). Preserve that entry! You can develop low spot cards into entries if you play the suit carefully! For example, suppose you have A1074 opposite KQ62 in dummy, and need three entries to dummy for other key finesses. You should play the 7 over to the King (or Queen) for the 1st round of the suit. [Then take your key finesse.] Next time, play the Ace (and the 2). If the suit breaks 3-2, you can play the 10 to the King (or Queen) [Another key finesse] & to the 6 on the 4th round of the suit [allowing you to take a 3rd key finesse]!

Sometimes you give up a trick you might not have had to lose in order to create an entry. For example, holding AQx opposite Jx, if you must create an entry to the dummy, try playing the Queen from your hand. Similarly, holding AKJxxx opposite 10xx, if you must create an entry to dummy, play the Jack from your hand.

When unblocking, you play an unusually high card from one hand in order to create (or save) an entry in the other hand. A jettison play is when you discard a card (usually an honor) in order to unblock. An unblocking example:

♠QJ10x ♥J98 ♦QJ9 ♣10xx

opposite

♠xx ♥K62 ♦AK ♣AQJxxx

... with the lead of the ♥5 to ♥8 and ♥A. You must unblock with ♥K! (Rule of 11 ensures that queen is on your left and you need heart entry for club finesse.) If you have

♠AKQJ1098x ♥A ♦-- ♣AQ10x

opposite

♠x ♥KQJxx ♦Axxx ♣xxx

... and the lead is the ♦K (against 6♠), take the ♦A and jettison your ♥A. Then play ♥KQJ, discarding clubs.

The ♦10

All the following hands came from real life at the bridge table. Hands #1 and #2 involve the travails of the ♦10.

Hand #1

<i>West</i>		<i>East</i>	
♠Q2		♠A8753	
♥872		♥AKQ4	
♦AK9875		♦10	
♣A2		♣K96	
<i>South</i>	<i>West</i>	<i>North</i>	<i>East</i>
			1♠
Pass	2♦	Pass	2♥
Pass	3NT	All Pass	

Opening lead: ♣3

You become Declarer in 3NT from the *West* after partner opens 1♠ and bids 2♥ over your 2♦ response. The opening lead is the ♣3. When developing long suits, in notrump and in suit contracts, it is vital to consider the entries to the hand with the long suit you wish to develop. Our Declarer did not remember that essential principle and played a low club from Dummy. My ♣J forced his ♣A. He went to Dummy with the heart and played the ♦10, overtaking with the ♦A, then ♦K. He gave up a diamond, finding them 3-3. However, he is now cut off from his hand. If *North* returns a heart or a club, Declarer will be stuck on Dummy and can only come to 8 tricks: 1 spade; 3 hearts; 2 diamonds; and 2 clubs. (*South* must be careful to lead the ♠J from ♠J10 doubleton when she wins a club – rather than returning another club and end playing partner.) Declarer can easily take 11 tricks if he wins the first club on Dummy with the ♣K (trick one) and then plays the ♦10 to the ♦A and ♦K, then a low diamond. That will bring in five diamond tricks whenever they are 3-3 or with 4-2 diamonds if the ♦Q or ♦J is doubleton. *West* has to preserve the ♣A entry back to the long diamonds.

Hand #2

North
 ♠K82
 ♥AQ109
 ♦10
 ♣A7642

South
 ♠A97
 ♥7
 ♦AQJ8762
 ♣J9

South West North East
 1♦ Dbl ?

Partner (*South*) opens 1♦ and RHO doubles for takeout. *North*'s correct bid is 1♥. Bids at the one level are 100% forcing. *North* could also redouble. This implies a misfit hand and shows 10 or more HCPs. If you bid 2♣, it is *not* forcing. Partner can pass. [After an opponent makes a takeout double, bids at the one level are one-round forcing. You don't want to risk missing your 4-4 major fit by failing to mention a major when you can. Bids at the two level are weak and not forcing.] *North* actually bid 2♣ at the table (*non-* forcing) and *South* rebid 2♦. *North* then bid 2NT (which is *not* forcing) – *North* mistakenly thinking that two over one game force applies after a takeout double by opponents. [It does *not*. There is no 2/1 game force in any competitive auction.] *South* then bid 3♦. The 3♦ bid says: "I have a weak hand, with a long suit. Do not bid 3NT without a filling honor in my suit or you may be sorry." [Remember, *South* thinks that *North* has a non-forcing hand.] *North* bid 3NT and the lead was the ♥3 (4th-best leads). Just like Hand #1, Declarer has the singleton ♦10 opposite a long suit. Furthermore, Dummy (the hand with the long suit), has only *one* outside entry. So, proper play is to kill the ♥K (which is played by *West*) with your ♥A and put the ♦10 on the table. When *East* plays low, you must overtake the ♦10 with the ♦J or ♦Q. [You will not get enough diamond tricks unless diamonds are 3-2, so you don't worry about a 4-1 diamond break.] *East* (your LHO) is likely to have the ♦K, and *West* (the takeout doubler) is likely to have all the other high cards. When the ♦Q (or ♦J) wins, you cash the Ace. Both opponents follow to the second round of diamonds, so you simply give up a diamond and still have the ♠A to get back to Dummy. Now you take 6 diamond tricks, 2 hearts, 2 spades, and 1 club. If you let the ♦10 ride at trick two, from misplaced thriftiness, best defense can limit you to 8 tricks.

Hand #3

<i>West</i>	<i>East</i>
♠K5	♠10764
♥QJ10983	♥752
♦KJ	♦9542
♣AQ2	♣K3

You are declaring 3♥ in the *West* (after the opponents competed to 3♣). LHO leads the ♥K, followed by ♥A and a low heart. What is your plan?

Dummy has one sure entry – the ♣K. However, you would like to be able to play low from Dummy twice – once in diamonds and once in spades. If you paid close attention to your trump suit, you will have noticed that precious ♥7 in Dummy. At trick 1, unblock your ♥8. At trick 2, unblock your ♥9. Voila! The ♥7 is now an *entry* to Dummy. You can try leading low to one of your Kings. Then, after pulling the last trump, you can get to Dummy with the ♣K to lead low toward your other King. If you do *not* unblock at tricks 1 and 2, you will have to *guess* which pointed suit to lead from Dummy. If you guess spades, you go down 2; if you guess diamonds, you go down 1.

It is good to bear in mind the principle that when the long trump hand has very strong intermediate spot cards, a little unblocking may create a trump entry to the weaker hand.