

§34. Timing the Hand – Harder Examples.

By the end of this chapter you should understand the following terms:

Trump or Dump: An expression used to explain the alternatives for ridding yourself of excess losers in a suit contract.

Trump Control: The idea that you can often leave the opponents with the master trump and play winners in other suits

This series follows on from §17 with some more difficult examples of play in a suit contract. When dummy is displayed you must **Count** your *winners* and *losers* and **Plan** how to eradicate excess losers.

The questions you have to ask yourself are: *Do you draw trumps immediately? Do you ruff your losers? Do you discard your losers?* All you can do with excess losers is **trump them** or **dump them**.

Note that it is only profitable to ruff losers in the *short trump hand*; ruffing in the long hand is usually ruffing in the wrong hand. To aid your thought processes, therefore, it is best to consider to count losers from the perspective of the long trump hand.

Let's start with a simple example. You are at the wheel as South in a contract of 4♠; West leads the ♥J.

Hand 1		♠ K J 5 4	
South plays in 4♠.		♥ 5 4	
West leads the ♥J.		♦ 9 8 6	
		♣ A Q 7 3	
♠ 9 7	Dummy	♠ A	
♥ J 10 9 8	W	♥ 7 6 3 2	
♦ A Q 5 3	E	♦ K 4 2	
♣ 10 8 5	Declarer	♣ K 9 6 4 2	
		♠ Q 10 8 6 3 2	
		♥ A K Q	
		♦ J 10 7	
		♣ J	

Well, West has found an unfortunate lead, as 4♠ has four top losers.

However, let's **Count** and **Plan** by counting winners and losers. There are six Spade winners, three Heart winners and a Club to take. We have already mentioned that there are four losers – three Diamonds and a trump. Four losers and nine winners – well, at least the arithmetic balances.

To make ten tricks do you need to take the Club finesse? No – that would be an unwarranted risk. It is easy enough to dump a Diamond loser from dummy on a top Heart, a job that needs doing immediately. Playing a trump at trick two risks the defence taking the ♠A and switching to Diamonds.

Once a loser has been eliminated (by cashing the ♥A K Q at tricks one, two and three) you can then draw trumps. Where does the tenth trick come from? By means of a ruff in dummy – a Diamond loser can be trumped on table in the *short trump hand*. Your ten tricks are made up from **six** Spade tricks (that's five natural winners and one ruff), three Hearts and a Club.

On some deals it is *declarer's* losers that have to be thrown. How might you time the play in 4♠ here?

Hand 2		♠ 10 6 4 3	
South plays in 4♠.		♥ K 10 4	
West leads the ♦Q.		♦ K 8 5	
		♣ 8 7 2	
♠ 8 2	Dummy	♠ A 7	
♥ 8 5 3	W	♥ A 9 7 6 2	
♦ Q J 10 3	E	♦ 9 6 2	
♣ A 9 5 4	Declarer	♣ 10 6 3	
		♠ K Q J 9 5	
		♥ Q J	
		♦ A 7 4	
		♣ K Q J	

Count and Plan. You may note that this Diamond lead is irritating as it threatens to set up a Diamond winner for the defence.

Winners: Four Spades, two Hearts, two Diamonds and two Clubs. Note that many of these winners are slow winners – the hand only has two top tricks (the ♦A K).

Losers: One Spade, one Heart, one Diamond and one Club.

That gives ten winners and four losers, so the arithmetic doesn't balance. Ho hum.

With sufficient winners it may look right to draw trumps but here East-West have the *tempo*. They'd take the ♠A and play another Diamond, setting up the fourth defensive trick. When in with the ♥A (or the ♣A) the defence would cash a Diamond and the contract would fail.

Correct timing is to rid yourself of a Diamond loser ASAP. Take the Diamond lead with the ♦A (important!) and play a Heart at trick two. East will take that and play another Diamond. Now you must play off the ♥K 10, dumping your Diamond loser before touching trumps.

You make your ten aforementioned winners, but only lose to three Aces.

1. Can you see why you have to take the ♦A at trick one and not the ♦K?
2. Can you see the vital role played by the ♥10?

Another type of deal requires a hard-to-see ruff in the dummy. Try playing 4♠ on this hand:

<p>Hand 3 South plays in 4♠. West leads the ♦J.</p>	<p>♠ 10 8 7 ♥ A 9 2 ♦ A 5 2 ♣ Q J 8 3</p>							
<p>♠ None ♥ K 8 6 4 ♦ J 10 9 7 ♣ A 9 5 4 2</p>	<table border="1" style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Dummy</td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">W</td><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td></tr> <tr><td colspan="2" style="padding: 2px;">Declarer</td></tr> </table>	Dummy		W	E	Declarer		<p>♠ 9 6 5 4 ♥ Q 10 5 3 ♦ Q 8 ♣ K 10 6</p>
Dummy								
W	E							
Declarer								
	<p>♠ A K Q J 3 2 ♥ J 7 ♦ K 6 4 3 ♣ 7</p>							

Count and Plan.

Winners: Six Spades, One Heart, two Diamonds and no Clubs. These are all top tricks.

Losers: One Heart, two Diamonds and one Club. Some players only see one Diamond loser, but if you look at the hand from the perspective of South there are two losers in the suit (unless Diamonds were to split 3-3, of course).

That makes nine winners and four losers, so at least the arithmetic balances.

With insufficient winners it would be unwise to draw trumps. Best play is to look to ruff the last Diamond in dummy, and that can only be done before playing trumps. Sure, if Spades split 2-2 it would be safe enough to draw them, but what if they split 3-1 (or even 4-0)? Taking all the trumps off the table would leave you with two Diamond losers.

The solution is simple enough – when you see it. Take the Diamond lead and play off two more rounds of Diamonds, conceding the third to West. In time, you can ruff your last, losing, Diamond with dummy's ♠10, draw all the trumps and claim your contract.

You make **seven** Spade tricks (that's six natural winners and a ruff in the short trump hand) and three top winners (the ♥A and the ♦A K).

§34. Example hands 1 to 4.

Hand 1 Love all, dealer North

♠ 9 5 ♥ A 5 ♦ J 9 7 4 ♣ 10 8 7 4 2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N			W		E							S			♠ 7 4 2 ♥ K Q J 9 7 ♦ K Q 5 3 ♣ K	
	N																		
W		E																	
	S																		
♠ A 8 6 3 ♥ 10 8 4 2 ♦ 10 2 ♣ A Q J		♠ K Q J 10 ♥ 6 3 ♦ A 8 6 ♣ 9 6 5 3																	

West	North	East	South
	Pass	1♥	Pass
3♥	Pass	4♥	Pass
Pass	Pass		
4♥ by East		Opening lead: ♠K	

East reaches 4♥ and South leads the top-of-a-sequence ♠K. That's a double whammy as far as declarer is concerned – it sets up two Spade winners for the defence and it removes an entry to dummy. Counting **winners**, East can see one Spade, four Hearts, one Diamond, three Clubs and a Diamond ruff or two in the *short trump hand*. That's (at least) ten winners. However, the fly in the ointment is that there are four **losers**: two Spades, one Heart and one Diamond. Before playing trumps, therefore, East has to dump two losing Spades on dummy's Clubs, and the only way of doing that is to cash the ♠A Q J at the first three tricks, "crashing" the ♠K at trick two.

Hand 2 North-South game, dealer East

♠ 4 ♥ K Q 10 7 5 ♦ A 5 3 ♣ K J 10 2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N			W		E							S			♠ 8 7 2 ♥ 6 2 ♦ K 8 7 4 ♣ 8 6 5 3	♠ K J 10 9 6 3 ♥ A 4 ♦ J 10 9 ♣ A 9
	N																		
W		E																	
	S																		
♠ A Q 5 ♥ J 9 8 3 ♦ Q 6 2 ♣ Q 7 4																			

West	North	East	South
		1♠	Pass
Pass	2♥	Pass	3♥
Pass	4♥	All Pass	
4♥ by North		Opening lead: ♦J	

North's **Count** and **Plan**, in 4♥, shows nine **winners**: one Spade, four Hearts, one Diamond and three Clubs. Given the time, North could draw trumps, knock out the ♠A, throw a Diamond on the long Club and – eventually – ruff a Diamond on the table. After the ♦J lead, though, covered by the ♦Q and ♦K, North can see four **losers** (the ♥A, two Diamonds and the ♠A). So, before playing trumps, declarer must dump one of his losing Clubs. The way to do this is to take the Spade finesse at trick two (East bid the suit, don't forget) and then dump a Diamond on the ♠A. Now trumps can be drawn and the Clubs set up. East-West are held to one Club, one Diamond and the ♥A.

Hand 3 East-West game, dealer South

♠ 5 4 2 ♥ K 8 ♦ 10 6 3 2 ♣ J 10 9 8	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N			W		E							S			♠ K 9 8 ♥ J 7 3 ♦ A K 9 ♣ Q 7 5 3	
	N																		
W		E																	
	S																		
♠ A Q J 10 7 ♥ A 6 4 2 ♦ Q J 8 ♣ 4		♠ 6 3 ♥ Q 10 9 5 ♦ 7 5 4 ♣ A K 6 2																	

West	North	East	South
			Pass
1♠	Pass	2♣	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♠	All Pass
4♠ by West		Opening lead: ♣J	

East-West pass up the chance to play in 3NT, a contract with nine top tricks, and alight in 4♠. *C'est la vie*. North leads the ♣J and declarer ruffs the second round. West's **Count** and **Plan** shows nine **winners** (five Spades, one Heart and three Diamonds) and four **losers** (three Hearts and a Club). How can West dispose of a losing Heart? By ruffing it in the dummy! West should play off the ♥A and concede a Heart. Winning the return, West can concede another Heart. Now, no matter what is led next, West can ruff his last Heart on table (with the ♠K, just to be flash) and make an extra trump winner. Ten tricks come from **six** Spades, one Heart and three Diamonds.

Hand 4 Game all, dealer West

♠ A K 7 4 ♥ A J 7 ♦ A 6 5 ♣ 6 4 2	<table border="1" style="width: 100%; height: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%; text-align: center;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td><td></td></tr> </table>		N			W		E							S			♠ J 8 2 ♥ 5 4 ♦ Q 7 3 2 ♣ K Q J 10	♠ Q 9 6 3 ♥ 6 3 2 ♦ K 10 9 4 ♣ 9 8
	N																		
W		E																	
	S																		
♠ 10 5 ♥ K Q 10 9 8 ♦ J 8 ♣ A 7 5 3																			

West	North	East	South
	1♠	Pass	2♥
Pass	4♥	Pass	Pass
Pass			
4♥ by South		Opening lead: ♠K	

Over 1♠, a 2♥ response shows a five-card suit, so North is entitled to raise Hearts – and to game. West has an easy lead of the ♠K and South has to **Count** and **Plan**. In terms of **winners** he can see two Spades, five Hearts, one Diamond and one Club. That's just nine. In terms of **losers** he can see one Diamond and three Clubs. How can he eradicate a loser? In similar vein to Hand 3, by ruffing it in dummy (*the short trump hand*). Win the ♠A and give up a Club. Win the next trick and concede a Club. Win the next trick, ruff the last Club (with the ♥A, just to be flash) and ten tricks are there. (That's two Spades, **six** Hearts and two minor-suit Aces).

§34. Example hands 5 to 8.

Hand 5 North-South game, dealer North

♠ A Q J 9 7 ♥ A 6 2 ♦ Q 7 5 3 ♣ 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">W</td><td style="width: 25%;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">S</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> </table>	N		W	E	S		♠ 8 5 4 2 ♥ Q J 10 9 ♦ 6 2 ♣ K J 8	♠ K 10 3 ♥ K 7 4 ♦ K 8 4 ♣ A 7 5 3
N									
W	E								
S									

West	North	East	South
Pass	1♠	Pass	2♣
Pass	2♦	Pass	4♠
4♠ by North		Opening lead: ♥Q	

This deal follows the pattern of Hands 3 and 4. This time 3NT would be beaten by a Club lead, so 4♠ is the only game in town. North's **Count** and **Plan** can identify nine **winners** (five Spades, two Hearts, one, slow, Diamond and one Club). There are four probable **losers**: one Heart and three Diamonds. Ruffing Clubs in the long trump hand is the wrong play; ruffing a Diamond in the *short trump hand* is the way to go. Win the Heart lead in hand and play a Diamond to the King. Win the Heart return and play off the ♦Q and another Diamond. Allow East-West to cash a Heart, win the next lead and ruff the last Diamond (high) in dummy. Ten tricks come from **six** Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and one Club.

Hand 6 East-West game, dealer East

♠ J 10 8 ♥ 9 4 3 ♦ A K 2 ♣ 9 8 6 4	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">W</td><td style="width: 25%;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">S</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> </table>	N		W	E	S		♠ A K 7 5 3 2 ♥ Q J 6 ♦ Q 10 7 ♣ 3	♠ 9 ♥ A K 7 5 2 ♦ 8 5 ♣ K Q J 10 7
N									
W	E								
S									

West	North	East	South
2♠	3♥	1♠	2♥
4♥ by South		3♣	4♥
4♥ by South		Opening lead: ♠4	

This deal and Hand 8 are all about *trump control* and that master trump(s) can often be left alone. Here, South finds himself in 4♥ after a competitive auction and East-West start with two rounds of Spades. After ruffing trick two, South applies his **Count** and **Plan**, noting two certain losers in the ♠A and the ♣A and an unknown number of trumps. To make the hand, Hearts will have to split 3-2, leaving just one loser there. In terms of **winners** that would leave four Hearts, two Diamonds and four, slow, Clubs. At tricks three and four South cashes the two top Hearts and then, leaving the boss ♥Q at large, plays the ♣K. Regardless of what happens next, South plays winning Clubs, inviting East to ruff in at his pleasure.

Hand 7 Game all, dealer South

♠ A 10 7 3 ♥ 4 3 ♦ 10 6 3 ♣ K Q J 7	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">W</td><td style="width: 25%;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">S</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> </table>	N		W	E	S		♠ K Q 6 4 ♥ Q 10 ♦ A Q 8 4 ♣ 8 6 3	♠ J 9 8 ♥ 6 5 2 ♦ K J 9 2 ♣ 10 9 4
N									
W	E								
S									

West	North	East	South
1♥	Pass	1♠	Pass
2♥	Pass	4♥	All Pass
4♥ by West		Opening lead: ♣K	

This is a tricky deal. East has an awkward call after West's 2♥ rebid with 4♥ the least of all evils. North leads the obvious ♣K and West applies a **Count** and **Plan**. **Losers**? One Spade and two Clubs for sure, possibly a Diamond. **Winners**? One Spade, six Hearts, one or two Diamonds, and a Club. So, it's all on the Diamond finesse? No! Declarer has two shots to his bow – if North has the ♠A he can set up two Spade winners and get his Diamond loser away. However, he cannot afford to draw trumps as entries are lacking to his hand. He must play a Spade at trick two (ducked) to the ♠Q. *Now* draw trumps and play another Spade. North has no winning defence.

Hand 8 Love all, dealer West

♠ J 6 ♥ K 8 7 5 4 ♦ Q J 3 ♣ Q 7 3	<table border="1" style="margin: auto;"> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">N</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">W</td><td style="width: 25%;">E</td></tr> <tr><td style="width: 25%;">S</td><td style="width: 25%;"></td></tr> </table>	N		W	E	S		♠ 9 ♥ J 10 9 6 3 ♦ 6 5 ♣ A K 6 4 2	♠ A 8 7 5 4 2 ♥ A Q 2 ♦ K 8 7 2 ♣ None
N									
W	E								
S									

West	North	East	South
Pass	Pass	Pass	1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♣
Pass	Pass	Pass	
2♣ by South		Opening lead: ♣J	

A simple part-score to finish with, but one beset with fiendish breaks. South decides to rebid his six-card suit and finishes in 2♣; West has an easy ♣J lead. Ruffing that it may appear obvious to play off the ♠A and another Spade to draw trumps, but that way leads to defeat. West would play off his top trumps and remove South's last Spade with a further Club lead. Now the defence can gain the lead with the ♦A and cash enough Club winners to beat the hand. A **Count** and **Plan** would save the day. South can afford three trump losers and two Diamond losers. To ensure his contract he should ruff trick two, cash the ♠A and play a Diamond. Now 2♣ is secure.

§34. Quiz on Timing the Hand – Harder Examples.

Here are three full deals for you to try.

In each case you are South, declarer. Obviously, your first act is to **Count** and **Plan**.

The Preliminary Analysis talks you through the first trick or two. What is your best subsequent play?

The answers are overleaf.

Q1.

How should you play in 4♠?

West leads the ♠Q.

Preliminary Analysis.

Your **Count** and **Plan** reveals nine winners (five Spades, two Diamonds and two Clubs) and four losers (two Hearts, one Diamond and one Club).

How are you going to generate a tenth trick (or eliminate a loser)?

♠ A 9 5
♥ Q 8 4 3 2
♦ K J
♣ K 8 5

Dummy	
W	E
Declarer	

♠ K Q J 10 4
♥ 9 5
♦ Q 5 4
♣ A 4 2

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	2♥	Pass	2♣
Pass	4♣	Pass	Pass
Pass			
4♣ by South		Opening lead: ♠Q	

Q2.

How should you play in 4♥?

West leads the ♦Q.

Preliminary Analysis.

Your **Count** and **Plan** reveals nine winners (two Spades, five Hearts and two Diamonds) and four losers (two Spades, one Diamond and one Club).

How are you going to generate a tenth trick (or eliminate a loser)?

♠ K 6 2
♥ J 10 7
♦ K 8 4
♣ 7 6 4 2

Dummy	
W	E
Declarer	

♠ A 8 5 3
♥ A K Q 9 5
♦ A 7 3
♣ Q

West	North	East	South
			1♥
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♠ ¹
Pass	4♥ ²	Pass	Pass
Pass			
4♥ by South		Opening lead: ♦Q	

1. South knows his partner cannot have four Spades and respond 1NT. However, he makes a strength-showing *reverse* in order to try and attract support for Hearts.

2. With three-card Heart support and a valuable ♠K, North is not shy of bidding game.

Q3.

How should you play in 4♥?

West leads the ♦Q.

Preliminary Analysis.

Your **Count** and **Plan** reveals a host of winners (some Hearts – depending on the split – four Diamonds and four Clubs). The only losers are in trumps.

This hand is easy if trumps are 3-2 but what if they are 4-1? You cannot afford Spade ruffs in dummy as then you would risk losing trump control.

♠ None
♥ A 9 7 6 4
♦ Q J 9 7
♣ K Q 5 2

Dummy	
W	E
Declarer	

♠ J 7 6 4
♥ 10 5 3
♦ A K 5
♣ A J 9

West	North	East	South
			1NT
Pass	2♦ ¹	Pass	2♥
Pass	3♣ ²	Pass	4♥ ³
Pass	Pass	Pass	
4♥ by South		Opening lead: ♠A	

1. Transfer to Hearts.

2. Any change of suit at the three-level following a transfer is forcing to game.

3. With a minimum hand, South jumps to game. 3♥ would show a better hand.

Answers.

A1.

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

Your **Count** and **Plan** shows three obvious **losers** (two Hearts and a Diamond) and a slow Club. A total of four losers. You can see nine **winners** (five Spades, two Diamonds and two Clubs). At least the arithmetic balances.

To eradicate a loser you need to set up a Diamond winner on which you can dump one of dummy's Club losers. The *tempo* is against you, so you must play on Diamonds early, winning the Club lead and leading a Diamond to the ♦K.

East takes the ♦A and plays another Club. You should take that, cash the ♦J, cross to a trump and throw a Club loser on the ♦Q. Now you can secure your tenth winner by ruffing the losing Club in dummy (the *short trump hand*). Ten tricks come from **six** Spades, two Diamonds and two Clubs.

A2.

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

Your **Count** and **Plan** shows four **losers** (two Spades, one Diamond and one Club) and nine **winners** (two Spades, five Hearts and two Diamonds). The arithmetic balances, but you still have insufficient winners unless Spades were to break 3-3, which is against the odds – on that basis it would be unwise to draw trumps too early.

To eradicate a Spade loser you should aim to ruff it in dummy – in the *short trump hand*. To that end, you should win the Diamond lead and play off the ♠A, the ♠K and give up a Spade. Now you can ruff a Spade on table (with a high trump), draw trumps and claim.

The requisite ten tricks come from two Spades, **six** Hearts and two Diamonds.

A3.

♠ None		♠ Q 10 9 5 3 2
♥ A 9 7 6 4		♥ 2
♦ Q J 9 7		♦ 8
♣ K Q 5 2		♣ 10 8 7 4 3
♠ A K 8	Dummy	
♥ K Q J 8	W E	
♦ 10 6 4 3 2	Declarer	
♣ 6		
♠ J 7 6 4		
♥ 10 5 3		
♦ A K 5		
♣ A J 9		

Your **Count** and **Plan** shows no **losers** outside the trump suit. **Winners?** Well, there are four Clubs, four Diamonds and some in trumps.

The reasons for the vagueness of the **Count** are that the trump split determines the number of available tricks in Hearts. With a 3-2 split you could make eleven tricks by playing off the ♥A and another Heart, losing just two trump tricks. However, that would spell disaster with this layout as West would draw all dummy's remaining trumps and have a couple of Spade winners to cash.

The safest line, after ruffing the Spade lead at trick one, is to cash just the ♥A and then play off minor-suit winners, allowing the defence to take three trump tricks (by ruffing) any time they like. Sure, if Hearts split 3-2 you'd be giving up the chance of an overtrick. Big deal.