

FAST & SLOW LOSERS

You have the following hand in the South position with favorable vulnerability. East has dealt and passed. What would you open?

S	South
♠	A63
♥	K72
♦	QJ1052
♣	A5

There are 14 HCP. Some would open 1NT on the basis of the 5-card diamond suit adding a length point. There are 3 honors in the suit, but you are missing the top two. Say you choose to open 1♦. West overcalls 2♣ and your partner responds 2♥. After East again passes, what do you rebid? You should than your LHO for inserting a bid. Now you know that partner has 5 or more hearts and thus you have a heart fit. With only 4 hearts, North would have doubled 2♣ (negative double). You must confirm the trump suit with a 3♥ rebid, showing a minimum hand.

Partner raises you to 4♥ which becomes the final contract. East leads a club. Take over for North:

N	North
♠	K108
♥	AQJ965
♦	93
♣	32

S	South
♠	A63
♥	K72
♦	QJ1052
♣	A5

In a trump contract, you always start by counting losers in your hand. You count 1 spade, 2 diamonds and 1 club loser. This is one too many. But all losers are not born equal. The diamond and club losers (given the lead) are fast losers. That means whenever the opponents lead those suits or you play those suits, you will immediately lose those tricks. However, the spade loser is a slow loser. That is, you can withstand two spade leads before a spade trick will be lost. This is important here, because you have enough time to set up the diamond suit to discard the losing spade; before the defenders can get to the spade suit for a lost trick.

So, your plan is to lead diamonds twice, losing to the $\spadesuit AK$. The dummy's next top diamond will provide a parking place for the loser spade in your hand.

Another important part of the plan is to decide what to do with the trump suit. There is no reason not to pull trump immediately after winning the $\clubsuit A$ on the first trick. Once hearts are all out, you start the diamonds. They will take their club trick and try to set up a spade trick for themselves. But you have the tempo and will make you 4♥ contract.

This is the entire deal:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> 6 D </div>	N North \spadesuit K108 \heartsuit AQJ965 \diamonds 93 \clubsuit 32	<table border="1" style="font-size: 10pt;"> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> <tr> <td>2\clubsuit</td> <td>2\heartsuit</td> <td>P</td> <td>1\diamonds</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>4\heartsuit</td> <td>P</td> <td>3\heartsuit</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td></td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> </tr> </table>	W	N	E	S	2 \clubsuit	2 \heartsuit	P	1 \diamonds	P	4 \heartsuit	P	3 \heartsuit	P		P	P
	W	N	E	S														
	2 \clubsuit	2 \heartsuit	P	1 \diamonds														
	P	4 \heartsuit	P	3 \heartsuit														
P		P	P															
W West \spadesuit Q97 \heartsuit 8 \diamonds K7 \clubsuit KQJ10986	E East \spadesuit J542 \heartsuit 1043 \diamonds A864 \clubsuit 74																	
S South \spadesuit A63 \heartsuit K72 \diamonds QJ1052 \clubsuit A5		4♥ N NS: 0 EW: 0																

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/zzrr8en>, or copy and paste it into your browser. Click on the "Next" button on the bottom to advance through each trick. Alternatively, by clicking on "Play" you can play all four hands and see if you can make the hand on your own. If you click on GIB, the software will analyze the hand and show the result for each opening lead.