

# MANAGING WINNERS & LOSERS AS DECLARER

As a new player, you are always taught how to make a plan as declarer. Most plans are quite basic on the surface and don't deal with the intricacies required to handle the many delicate situations that arise. Personally, I've found counting winners and losers when dummy is displayed is helpful.

There are also two different types of winners and losers - fast ones and slow ones. The opposition can't do anything to combat fast winners and losers. Slow winners and losers, however, may take several rounds to develop into tricks. Declarer may be able to throw the losers away in the nick of time - provided they have a plan.

## *Counting winners and losers*

In the table below, I separate slow and fast winners and losers. Pay close attention to the slow losers and winners as these often form the more intricate picture when choosing your grand plan of play.

	Declarer	Dummy
Example 1	♠K94	♠A73
	♥KQ108	♥J9742
	♦KQ2	♦J4
	♣A52	♣KQ4

Playing match points, you declare 4♥ after a transfer auction on the lead of the ♠Q. On the surface, you have 2 fast losers (two aces) but you also have 1 slow loser (3<sup>rd</sup> round of spades). You have fast winners ♣AKQ but a useful discard is not available due to the 3-3 club fit.

	Fast winners	Slow winners	Fast losers	Slow losers	
<b>Spades</b>	2	0	0	1	
<b>Hearts</b>	0	4	1	0	
<b>Diamonds</b>	0	2	1	0	
<b>Clubs</b>	3	0	0	0	

Fast losers can only be dealt with immediately by playing fast winners. Slow losers however, can be dealt with by either fast winners or slow winners.

There are 2 slow winners in diamonds ♦KQJ that may be useful for a discard as the diamond fit is 3-2.

Thoughts;

- I have a **slow loser** developing in spades. The opponents have led that suit knocking out one of my fast winners. One more round of spades will develop a loser in that suit.
- How do I cover my slow spade loser? By playing either **fast winners** or developing **slow winners**.
- **Fast winners**. There are 3 in clubs but there is no discard available due to the 3-3 fit - playing clubs is of no use
- **Slow winners**. There are 2 available in diamonds by knocking out the  $\heartsuit A$ . I can discard the 3<sup>rd</sup> round of spades on a winning diamond. Do I have time?

Final thought;

- Don't play trumps at trick 2 as you will hand over the lead to the opponents to play another spade and develop their slow winner there BEFORE you have developed your slow winners in diamonds.

Plan of play:

- Win the  $\spadesuit A$  in dummy
- Play the  $\heartsuit J$
- Win the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of spades
- Play the  $\heartsuit KQ$ , discarding dummy's losing spade
- Play trumps now

### ***Slow winners when suits break favourably***

Whilst it is easier to recognize slow winners in honour combinations ( $\heartsuit KQJ$  produces 2 slow winners), they may also develop when suits breaking evenly.

	Declarer	Dummy
Example 2	$\spadesuit A98$	$\spadesuit K53$
	$\heartsuit J42$	$\heartsuit A87$
	$\heartsuit K53$	$\heartsuit A642$
	$\clubsuit AQ52$	$\clubsuit K74$

Playing a 3NT, North leads the  $\heartsuit K$ . Declarer has 8 **fast winners** and 2 potential **slow winners** (either minor suit breaking 3-3). The heart suit looks treacherous. However, the opening leads marks North with the likely  $\heartsuit Q$ . It is imperative to duck the  $\heartsuit K$  to freeze North out. Stopping them from leading hearts at trick 2, productively.

When North switches to another suit, declarer should duck a diamond. This will develop a slow winner if diamonds break 3-3. When South wins to lead a heart through the jack, declarer should win and test both minor suits for a 3-3 break.

1.

	North	Dir: S	
	♠ A73	Vul: Nil	
	♥ J9742		
	♦ J4		
	♣ KQ4		
West		East	
♠ QJ106		♠ 852	
♥ 63		♥ A5	
♦ A653		♦ 10987	
♣ 973		♣ J1086	
	South		
	♠ K94		
	♥ KQ108		
	♦ KQ2		
	♣ A52		

North	East	South	West
		1NT	No
2♦	No	3♥	No
4♥	No	No	No

**Bidding:** North transfers to hearts and South super-accepts showing 4+ hearts.

**Play:** West leads the ♠Q. As declarer has 1 slow loser in spades to go with their 2 fast losers (2 aces). Declarer can avoid the slow spade loser by developing 2 slow diamonds losers for a discard. Win the ♠A. Play the ♦J. Win the ♠K. Discard the dummy's losing spade on the ♦KQ. Play trumps now.

2.

	North	Dir: S	
	♠ A76	Vul: All	
	♥ Q10976		
	♦ Q94		
	♣ Q5		
West		East	
♠ QJ102		♠ 983	
♥ 5		♥ A4	
♦ K1076		♦ 8532	
♣ J832		♣ A1076	
	South		
	♠ K54		
	♥ KJ832		
	♦ AJ		
	♣ K94		

North	East	South	West
		1NT	No
2♦	No	3♥	No
4♥	No	No	No

**Bidding:** The same auction to the previous hand. There are better methods than only jumping in the trump suit to show a super-accept. I will discuss these in the lesson

**Play:** West leads the ♠Q. Declarer is facing a slow spade loser unless action is taken. The ♦QJ represents a slow winner that can be used to discard the spade loser in time. Win the ♠K (retain dummy's ♠A entry). Play the ♦AJ (giving away the ♦K). Win the ♠A. Play the ♦Q discarding the spade loser. Now play diamonds.

3.

	North	Dir: S	
	♠ AQ5	Vul: Nil	
	♥ 654		
	♦ A753		
	♣ 765		
	West	East	
♠	J10974	♠	86
♥	A7	♥	K983
♦	J4	♦	Q1098
♣	Q1082	♣	J94
	South		
	♠ K32		
	♥ QJ102		
	♦ K62		
	♣ AK3		

North	East	South	West
		1NT	No
3NT	No	No	No

**Bidding:** Standard auction to 3NT  
**Play:** West leads the ♠J. Declarer has 7 fast winners. They have the possibility of 1 slow diamond winner and 2 slow heart winners. As hearts represent the best opportunity declarer should go there first. Win the ♠Q. Play towards the ♥Q. West wins the ♥A and continues spades. Declarer wins in dummy again to play towards the ♥J102. East ducks and declarer wins. They cross to dummy's ♦A and plays the 3rd heart through East. Developing their 2 slow heart winners for 9 tricks.

4.

	North	Dir: S	
	♠ AK63	Vul: Nil	
	♥ Q6		
	♦ 863		
	♣ 8765		
	West	East	
♠	J97	♠	108542
♥	872	♥	A4
♦	KQ104	♦	J97
♣	KJ4	♣	A92
	South		
	♠ Q		
	♥ KJ10953		
	♦ A52		
	♣ Q103		

North	East	South	West
		1♥	No
1♠	No	2♥	No
No	No		

**Bidding:** North has no reason to bid on after South shows a minimum hand.  
**Play:** West leads the ♦K. Declarer is facing 2 slow diamonds losers plus 1 fast heart loser and 3 fast club losers. To combat these 6 losers, they have 3 fast spade winners. When South wins the ♦A, they cannot afford to lose the lead to the ♥A immediately as the defenders will take their 6 winners. Use dummy's fast spade winners now to discard 1 of declarer's losers. Win the ♦A. Overtake the ♠Q with dummy's ♠K and cash the ♠A for a discard.