

Dummy Reversal

In a suit contract we must identify the *master hand* - that is the hand we count our losers from. With 5-3 fits we tend to think of the long hand as the master hand because we are told that the way to gain tricks is by trumping in the short hand. One of the advantages of having a 4-4 fit as opposed to a 5-3 fit is that we can choose to make either hand the *master hand* because with a 4-4 fit there is no short hand. If the hands are of equal length and approximate strength then either hand can be made the *master hand* and we should count our losers with each hand treated as the master preferring to make the hand with the fewer losers the *master hand*. The 4-4 case is the routine Dummy Reversal case. There are times in a 5-3 fit when an advantage can be found by considering the long hand the dummy without regard to which hand is the real dummy. So, when there is a long hand and short hand it might be advantageous to count our losers both ways and if it turns out that the short hand has fewer losers that should be the preferable *master hand*. A shorthand approach that works equally well is just to count your losers in each hand – not including trump. In this method the hand with the most losers should then be the master hand. So how do we make the long hand the short hand? Sometimes we get help from the defenders. Take this example holding Dummy: AK94 Declarer: QJT53. The Opening lead is in a suit that the long hand has a singleton loser or void forcing the declarer to trump in the long hand on either the 1st or 2nd round. Your original plan was likely predicated on gaining a trick by ruffing in the actual dummy but... Your holding has just been reduced to 4-4; you should recount your losers from both sides again you might find an alternate, better line of play now that the defenders have forced it. This is the classic Dummy reverse.

You need your higher Trump cards to draw trump, so when those higher cards are in the shorter Dummy they need to be preserved for drawing trump purposes this presents the declarer with the opportunity to possibly make the Dummy the master hand. It is a known fact that you can only get as many tricks in a suit as you have cards in your longest suit. A 5-3 holding in a suit can only produce a maximum of 5 tricks – not so with the trump suit. Suppose you need 6 trump tricks from the following ♥ suit.

Dummy	♠A952 ♥AKQ
Declarer	♠9 ♥T9543

You could take the chance that the ♥J is held either Jx-xxx a 3-2 split or xxxx-J in a 4-1 split and get 6 tricks from the trump suit by ruffing another suit with the ♥Q and then draw trump. But with the above holding you can get 6 trump tricks as follows. Take the ♠A and ruff a ♠. Return to Dummy in trump, drawing 1 round and ruff a second ♠. Return to the Dummy in another suit or by drawing another round of Trump and ruff a 3rd ♠. You will have won 3 natural Trump tricks and 3 ruffs for the 6 needed tricks.

You are in a 4♥ contract with the following hands.

♠95
♥KQJ9
♦A863
♣KQ2

♠A54
♥AT843
♦2
♣A876

Your loser count with Declarers (lower) hand the master hand is 2♠ and 1♣. Assuming a 2-2 trump split 2 of the 3 losers can be covered by ruffing in the short hand. That is, in order win 12 tricks (2

over tricks) trump must be split 2-2 but if trump is split 3-1 you have only 1 dummy ruff available and can only win 11 tricks. Treating the upper hand as the master hand you have 3♦ and 1♠ but the 3♦ losers can be trumped in the long hand leaving the 4 trump in the master hand to draw all the trump even if the split is 4-0 guaranteeing 12 total tricks and perhaps 13 if the ♣ suit splits 3-3. The dummy reversal garnered 1♠, 3♣, 1♦ and 7 trump tricks – 12 sure tricks.

You should note that in both the examples that the process of trumping in the long hand we are effectively turning the long hand into the short hand relying then on the original short hand to be the final trump drawing hand. That is why in dummy reversal the short hand must contain high trump cards.

There can be a tactical advantage to dummy reversal as well. If the opponents mount a 'tapping defense' i.e. forcing you to ruff in the long hand (because they know that you don't gain tricks that way) they may actually be helping you remove your dummy losers which is the goal of the dummy reversal technique. In the normal approach we are trying to remove losers from the long hand by trumping in the short hand.

You might have noticed that hands where dummy reversal works is when the long hand has a short suit opposite a number of losers in that suit in the Dummy. Another way to spot the Dummy reversal hand.