

DUMMY REVERSAL by LARRY COHEN

This deal is from my playing career at a U.S. Team Trials. You deal as South with both sides vulnerable, holding:

♠5
♥K Q J 9 5
♦A 9 8
♣K Q 9 2

You open 1♥ and partner responds 1♠. Your rebid is easy; 2♣. Partner now bids 2♦, fourth-suit forcing to game. You can bid 2NT because you have diamonds stopped, but I prefer 3♦, which gives partner a nice picture of your hand. He will know you have five-plus hearts, four-plus clubs, at least three diamonds, and therefore short spades.

This information helped us to reach 6♥ (the rest of the auction involved RKC). The opening lead is the ♠A and you see:

Vul: Both	♠9 8 7 6
Dir: South	♥A 10 2
	♦K Q 2
	♣A 4 3
	♠5
	♥K Q J 9 5
	♦A 9 8
	♣K Q 9 2

The fact that you were short in spades was good news to partner--he knew that all of his cards were working.

After the ♠A, the defense continues spades and you ruff. What is your plan?

The only possible loser in your hand is the fourth round of clubs. If clubs split 3-3 you will have 12 easy tricks (unless hearts are 5-0, but that wouldn't be fair). What if clubs are 4-2? You still might survive in one of two ways: 1) West has doubleton jack or doubleton ten (or doubleton jack-ten). Then you can cash two top clubs and guess to finesse your ♣9. 2) Maybe one defender has only two hearts and two clubs; then you can draw only two rounds of trumps and ruff the fourth club in dummy.

I am just toying with you. This is one of those hands where you have to consider a dummy reversal.

What if you can ruff three spades in your hand? Now we're talking. As long as there are no bad splits (especially 4-1 trumps), you will have 12 tricks regardless of how clubs behave. Furthermore, if you time it right, you can combine all your chances.

After ruffing the spade, you lay down your ♥K (all following) and then continue with a second heart to dummy. Why draw two rounds of trump if you are planning on reversing the dummy? Because if trumps are 4-1, you can't ruff even one more spade in your hand--you will let the opponent with four trumps end up with more trumps than you. If you find out hearts are 4-1, you will abandon the dummy reversal plan. But, when everyone follows on the second heart you are in business.

In dummy, you can ruff another spade in your hand. Then you cross to the ♣A and ruff dummy's last small spade with your last trump. All that is left is to travel to dummy in diamonds and draw their last trump. On that last trump, you throw away a small club and claim.

This is a textbook example of a dummy reversal with the added twist that you can change plans in midstream if the trumps don't split. (In real life, I hate to say, trumps were 4-1 and clubs were 6-0--the wrong way--so I had no chance to make my slam.) However, if I were dealing the cards, this would have been the deal:

Vul: Both	♠9 8 7 6	
Dir: South	♥A 10 2	
	♦K Q 2	
	♣A 4 3	
♠A J 10 4		♠K Q 3 2
♥8 7		♥6 4 3
♦J 10 3		♦7 6 5 4
♣J 7 6 5		♣10 8
	♠5	
	♥K Q J 9 5	
	♦A 9 8	
	♣K Q 9 2	

With this fairly normal layout, all plans fail other than the dummy reversal.

Playing the Odds by Karen Walker

Cards Missing	Break	%
2	1-1	52.0
	2-0	48.0
3	2-1	78.0
	3-0	22.0
4	3-1	49.7
	2-2	40.7
	4-0	9.6
5	3-2	67.8
	4-1	28.3
	5-0	3.9

Cards Missing	Break	%
6	4-2	48.5
	3-3	35.5
	5-1	14.5
	6-0	1.5
7	4-3	62.2
	5-2	30.5
	6-1	6.8
8	7-0	0.5
	5-3	47.1
	4-4	32.7
	6-2	17.1
	7-1	2.9
	8-0	0.2

When you're declaring a bridge hand, it's beneficial to know some simple odds about the chances for favorable suit breaks and finesses. This knowledge will help you estimate the potential number of tricks you can take in a specific suit combination.

Knowing the odds will also help you decide which overall line of play you should take to make your contract. For example, if you have to choose between playing for a 7-card side suit to break 3-3 in the opponents' hands or taking a successful finesse, you'll know that the finesse is a better bet (50%) than the suit break (36%).

Odds of suit breaks:

In general: An **ODD** number of missing cards will tend to break evenly -- if you are missing 5 cards in a suit, they will divide 3-2 more often than 4-1.

An **EVEN** number of missing cards will tend to break **UNEVENLY** -- if you are missing 6 cards in a suit, they will divide 4-2 more often than 3-3.

To explain the above chart:

If you have a combined fit of 7 cards in a suit (your opponents have 6):

3-3 break = 36%

4-2 = 48%

5-1 = 15%

6-0 = 1%

You have 8, they have 5:

3-2 = 68%

4-1 = 28%

5-0 = 4%

You have 9, they have 4:

2-2 = 40%

3-1 = 50%

4-0 = 10%

You have 10, they have 3:

2-1 = 78%

3-0 = 22%

Editor's note: You do not have to memorize all this, just know how the cards will divide most of the time.

Finding honors:

Your expected percentage of success when you need:

One finesse to work = 50%

One of two finesses to work = 75%

Two of two finesses to work = 25%

At least two of three finesses = 50%

The presence of spot cards (10's and 9's) will often increase your odds of finding or dropping honors:

AKQ10 opposite xxx = 61% chance of 4 tricks (because when the suit breaks 4-2 or 5-1, the jack may drop singleton or doubleton).

AJ98 opposite xxx = 38% chance of 3 tricks (when the 10 and one or two higher honors are onside (*onside means the missing honors are located where you need them to be*) -- with the K10, Q10 or KQ10 onside). Lead toward the AJ98 and if second-hand plays a low card, play the 8. If the 8 is won by the king or queen, repeat the finesse by leading low to the 9.

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The following hand by **EDDIE KANTAR** will help you with percentages and placing the opponents' honour cards.

Dir: West

Vul: Both

North

S. 92

H. 9

D. A86

C. AKQJ532

West

S. K753

H. AQ8742

D. J3

C. 75

East

S. Q874

H. KJ65

D. Q1095

C. 9

South

S. AJ10

H. 103

D. K742

C. 10876

West	North	East	South
Pass	1C	Pass	1D
1H	3C	3H	4C
Pass	5C	All Pass	

Opening lead: H5

Bidding Commentary: As West, you have an awkward hand. It is usually not a good idea to open a Weak Two with a side four card major and the hand isn't strong enough to open 1H. After the 1D response, you might try bidding 2H now! Why now? If you think about it, a delayed 2H jump overcall, should show 6 hearts and 4 spades, the reason for not opening 2H in the first place.

Defensive Commentary: West does best to win the HA and continue the suit.

Play Commentary: As North, you have two lines of play available. You can play three rounds of diamonds and hope they break 3-3 (35-36%). If they do, dummy's long diamond provides a resting place for your losing spade. Alternatively, you can take two spade finesses. If East has one or both of the spade honors (75%), you can set up a spade trick for a diamond discard. Since the double spade finesse is more than twice as likely to produce the extra trick you need, that is the better line of play.

It is nice to know a little bit about suit distributions. If you have seven cards in a suit between your hand and dummy, you can expect a 3-3 break about 1/3 of the time, a 4-2 break close to 50% of the time. If you need one of two finesses to work, you can expect one of them will work about 75% of the time. Of course, the bidding and previous plays must be considered, but those percentages are important to know.

BIDDING ISSUES

1.

S 32
H 32
D AQ76
C AK985

You are the dealer with the hand to the left. If you open 1C and partner responds 1S.

Your rebid is?

Yes, this is now a big problem. You cannot bid 1NT because you do not have a Heart stopper. The 1NT bid would promise to have all OTHER unbid suits stopped.

You cannot now bid 2D as this would be a REVERSE.

DO NOT TELL ME YOU DO NOT PLAY REVERSES or I will tell you to take up Euchre!!

Reverses are an important part of the game.

As an opener with a minimum hand, here are your choices:

You may raise partner's suit at the cheapest level.

You may rebid your own suit at the cheapest level.

You may rebid the cheapest number of NT (stoppers in unbid suits)

You may bid a new suit at the ONE level.

You may bid a new suit at the TWO level BUT it must be of a lower rank than the suit you opened.

This last one is the one that causes so much grief. On the above hand, it is instinctive to wish to bid your suits naturally. Clubs first then the Diamonds. BUT if you do that, you are guaranteeing 17 or more points (including distribution) as it is NOT one of the minimum rebids.

So, do yourself a favour...open the above hand with 1D. If partner bids 1H or 1S, now bid 2C. Yes, you have lied about the length of your suits but you have only lied by one card. This is okay but it is NOT okay to lie about the strength of your hand and promise 17 or more points by reversing.

A reverse is when you, as opener, bids a new suit at the TWO level that is HIGHER in rank than the suit you opened.

2.

S A764
H K43
D KJ5
C 972

You are responder to partner's opening bid of 1C. You respond 1S. She bids 1NT.

Her 1NT rebid promises 12-14 HCP and a balanced hand, not even a singleton in Spades as that would never be called balanced.

NOTE that opener cannot have 15 HCP balanced or she would have opened with 1NT.

Your bid?

Bid 2NT, this shows 11 or 12 HCP and invites her to bid 3NT with 14 HCP or a very good 13 HCP and a good quality 5 card minor suit.

3.

S A764
H K43
D KJ5
C Q72

Same hand but now you have the C Queen added. You are responder to partner's opening bid of 1C. You respond 1S. She bids 1NT.

Your bid?

Now you bid 3NT as 2NT is not forcing and opener can pass.

The one who knows goes! Opener has 12-14 HCP and you have 13 HCP, bid game.

But in both cases of 2) and 3) always 1S first in case opener happens to have a matching 4 card major (in this case Spades).

4.

S Kxx
H AKxxx
D KQ
C Kxx

This time you are the opener.

You open 1H and partner responds 1NT

Your bid?

You have already told partner that you have a balanced hand. You now bid 2NT. This guarantees 18 or 19 HCP and a balanced hand with 5 Hearts. You are inviting responder to do the arithmetic. If she has 7 or more HCP, she will now accept the invitation and bid 3NT.
