

LOSER ON LOSER

You are sitting South and after your partner opens 1♣, East jump overcalls 2♦. This is your hand:

South
 ♠K65
 ♥KQ1073
 ♦104
 ♣AJ8

East's bid is like a weak-two opening. It promises 6 good diamonds and less than opening hand strength. The opponents have a habit of interfering with your auction. But the interference usually gives you additional options than those in an uncontested auction. You can still bid your hearts, but after an overcall, 2♥ would promise 5 or more hearts. Now partner can support you with only 3 hearts. The auction continues:

West	North	East	South
	1♣	2♦	2♥
Pass	3♥	Pass	??

You have 13 HCP, a good 6-card heart suit, and a stiff ♣A. You certainly want to be in game. But your partner's rebid showed a minimum opening, 13-15 points. There is no reason to go beyond game, so you rebid 4♥, which become the final contract.

West leads the ♦A and you see this dummy:

	North	
	♠A87	
	♥A654	
	♦952	
	♣KQ6	
West		East
♦A		
	South	
	♠K65	
	♥KQ1073	
	♦104	
	♣AJ8	

In a trump contract, you count the losers in your hand: you have 1 spade loser, and 2 diamond losers. If hearts break no worse than 3-1, you will have no heart losers. So things look good. East leads another diamond, the ♦3, to East's ♦J and for the third trick, East leads back the ♦K.

You have no more diamonds and can ruff, but the bidding has told you that East started with 6 diamonds. Also, you've seen the $\spadesuit 2$ in the dummy and know that West started with a doubleton. If he started with 3 diamonds he would have led the top of the remaining doubleton. All this should convince you that if you ruff with anything lower than the $\heartsuit Q$, West will over ruff you. If you trump high, the outstanding $\heartsuit J$ might set up as a winner. Either way, you are in danger of losing 3 diamond tricks and the spade, for down one.

From the title of this article, you should recognize that the way out of this dilemma is not to ruff at all!. Rather, dump the losing spade on that $\spadesuit K$. Now, although you have 3 diamond losers, you have no spade losers.

This play is called "loser on loser." You parked a losing spade on a losing diamond trick, collapsing the number of losers from four to three – and making your contract.

Here is the entire deal:

<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">D</div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; font-size: 24px;">1</div>		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">N North</div> \spadesuit A87 \heartsuit A654 \diamondsuit 952 \clubsuit KQ6	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>W</th> <th>N</th> <th>E</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>$1\spadesuit$</td> <td>$2\diamondsuit$</td> <td>$2\heartsuit$</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>$3\heartsuit$</td> <td>P</td> <td>$4\heartsuit$</td> </tr> <tr> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td>P</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	W	N	E	S	$1\spadesuit$	$2\diamondsuit$	$2\heartsuit$		P	$3\heartsuit$	P	$4\heartsuit$	P	P	P	
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<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">W West</div> \spadesuit 10943 \heartsuit J98 \diamondsuit A3 \clubsuit 10942		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">E East</div> \spadesuit QJ2 \heartsuit 2 \diamondsuit KQJ876 \clubsuit 753																	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;">S South</div> \spadesuit K65 \heartsuit KQ1073 \diamondsuit 104 \clubsuit AJ8		<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> $4\heartsuit$ S NS: 0 EW: 0 </div>																

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/oebk8jm>, 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.