

## THE MAGIC OF SHORT SUITS

You are South with this hand:

South  
♠ 82  
♥ AJ108765  
♦ AJ2  
♣ Q

You open 1♥ and your LHO overcalls 4♦. Your partner doubles and RHO passes. What do you do?

Partner's double was not for penalty. It was called a negative double. It promises at least one 4-card major and enough strength to compete. Most of the time negative doubles are used at the one or two levels. Sometime, the intervening bid is a preempt at the 3 or 4 level, as in this example. You and your partner should have an agreement on how high the double is of the negative type and not the penalty type. I like to play that a double of any intervening bid through 4♦ is negative. Some play that double of **any** intervening bid is negative. This makes some sense, since when was the last time you had the values to double an 8-card preemptive 4♠ bid?

The double has come around to you and you certainly don't want to play in a 4-2 spade fit. Passing is out, also. Look at your heart suit. This is called a self-sufficient trump suit. That means, that even if your partner has only 1 heart, your suit is good enough to take out the opponent's trump. You can measure this feature by adding the number of cards in the suit to the number of honors. This is called Suit Quality (SQ). Any suit with a SQ of 10 or more can and must be made the trump suit. Your heart SQ is  $7+3=10$ .

Therefore, the best bid to make here, is 4♥. This becomes the final contract. West leads the ♦K and you see this dummy:

	North	
	♠ K543	
	♥ K9	
	♦ 6	
	♣ A107643	
West		East
♦K		
	South	
	♠ 82	
	♥ AJ108765	
	♦ AJ2	
	♣ Q	

What would be your plan?

If you win the first trick and pull trump, you might capture the ♥Q if it is sitting singleton or doubleton. But even if you do manage to take 7 heart tricks, you only have 2 additional tricks in your minor suit aces. You need to score the two hearts in the dummy separately from the 7 in your hand by trumping the two diamonds. That would give you 2 more tricks but you would certainly lose one of the hearts to the ♥Q.

Since you, your partner and West all have very distributional hands, East must also have an extreme shortage, and that will be in diamonds. Your diamond ruffs can be over-ruffed by East, but the dummy's trump is higher than all the outstanding trump except the ♥Q, which you expect to lose anyway. So your plan is safe.

You will win the ♦A and ruff a diamond. Take the ♣A and ruff a club high, making certain you get into your hand. Now ruff the third diamond and ruff another club. Now you are back in your hand where you can pull the remaining trump and concede three tricks: 2 spades and the ♥Q.

This is the entire hand:

11 D	<b>N North</b> ♠ K543 ♥ K9 ♦ 6 ♣ A107643	W N E S 4♦ X P 1♥ P P P 4♥
	<b>W West</b> ♠ J97 ♥ Q ♦ KQ1097543 ♣ 8	<b>E East</b> ♠ AQ106 ♥ 432 ♦ 8 ♣ KJ952
	<b>S South</b> ♠ 82 ♥ AJ108765 ♦ AJ2 ♣ Q	4♥ S NS: 0 EW: 0

You can see how this hand should be played by clicking on this link: <http://tinyurl.com/qccmw2g>, 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.