

## Declarer Play in a Suit Contract (continued from last week)

### Trump Control

In general, do not take ruffs in the hand with the longer trumps as you are likely to lose control of the hand.

♠ 4

♠ A 7 5

♥ K J 7

♥ Q 8 3

♦ A K Q J 3

♦ 8 7 6

♣ K J 7 4

♣ Q T 9 2

**West plays in 5♦. North leads ♠K. How do you play?**

After you win the trick with the Ace of spades do not be tempted to ruff a spade in your hand, as you are liable to *lose control* of the hand.

Let's look at what would happen if you did ruff a spade in hand at trick two.

You would then draw trumps and they break kindly, 3 – 2. Now you start on the clubs. When the defenders take their Ace they will lead back a spade, which you can ruff, but it is with your last remaining trump. After cashing your winning clubs, you will have to start on the hearts. Now when the opponents win their Ace they will cash winning spades and you can do nothing about it.

You have run out of trumps and lost control of the hand.

The correct way to play this hand, after winning the spade Ace at trick one, is to draw trumps (in three rounds) and then start on the clubs. Again when they win their Ace they will lead back a spade for you to ruff. Now though when you start on the hearts (after cashing your club tricks) you still have a trump left to deal with another spade return after they win the Ace of hearts (because you did not waste it at trick two!)

Moral: avoid ruffing in the long trump hand if possible, particularly if you are going to “run out” of trumps and lose control of the hand.

### Drawing a master trump

If your trump suit is

**A K 6 4    opposite    T 7 3 2**

Often you will draw two rounds of trumps with the Ace and King and if the defenders trumps split 3 – 2, they will usually then have the master trump. Should you draw it?

The answer is (in general) no. There are lots of reasons for this:

You are wasting two of your trumps to draw just one of theirs; you may lose trump control of the hand; you may be able to put your trumps to better use.

E.g.

♠ void

♥ A K 8 7 2

♦ A K Q J T

♣ A K 4

♠ A K Q

♥ 9 5 3

♦ 9 8 7

♣ 9 8 3 2

West is in 6♥. North leads the ♦Q. How do you play?

The problem with this hand is that you cannot reach those lovely spades in the dummy. However if you win the first trick in hand and draw two rounds of trumps (with the Ace and King) the contract is certain providing the defenders trumps break 3 – 2.

Do not draw the last trump. Instead play out all your top diamonds. If the opposition ruff one of these (with their master trump) then your third trump in the dummy becomes the entry to the master spades.

If the opposition refuse to ruff the diamonds then discard two clubs from dummy on the last diamonds and then you can ruff your losing club in the dummy, making the contract for the loss on just one spade trick.

### Dummy reversal

Usually in a trump contract the declarer has more trumps than the dummy and so “extra” tricks can be made by ruffing with the dummies trumps (the shorter trump hand). As already stated it is usually not a good idea to take ruffs with declarer’s trumps as it will shorten his trump holding.

Sometimes however you can make the dummy the “longer” trump hand and take ruffs in declarer’s hand. This is called dummy reversal.

E.g a trump suit that is

**A K Q 7 6 opposite J T 9**

will normally only take five tricks, plus any ruffs you can take in the dummy. Indeed it will only take just five tricks if dummy cannot ruff anything.

However if you can take three ruffs in declarer’s hand and then draw trumps with the dummies trumps you will make six tricks (assuming the trumps break no worse than 3 – 2).

E.g.

♠ A K Q 7 6

♠ J T 9

♥ A 7 2

♥ K Q 8

♦ 2

♦ A 9 8 7

♣ A 8 4 3

♣ K Q 2

**West is in 7♠. North leads the ♠2. How do you play?**

You could just draw trumps and then play out your tricks hoping that the clubs will break 3 – 3, or the defenders will make a mistake. However even suits are more likely to break oddly (4 – 2 in this case) and defenders are very careful against a grand slam.

A better way to play the hand is to ruff three diamonds in your hand and then make the dummy draw the trumps. This only needs the trumps to be 3 – 2.

Win the trump lead in dummy and play Ace and then another diamond. Ruff it in your hand (be flamboyant – ruff with the Ace!)

Cross to dummy with a trump and ruff another diamond (with the King this time)

Cross back to dummy with a heart and ruff your last diamond with the Queen of trumps. Now cross back to dummy with either a club or another heart ( a club is probably safer, assuming the defenders have not discarded at this point), draw the last trump, throwing the three of clubs from hand, and then you just have winning clubs and hearts. Grand Slam made.

### The crossruff

We now come to another way to handle a suit contract: the crossruff. This occurs when both hands have a shortage in a different side suit, allowing trumps to be made separately by ruffing back and forth. Here is an example:

♠ K J 6 2

♠ A Q 5 4

♥ 7 3 2

♥ K 9 8 4

♦ A 9 6 4 3

♦ void

♣ 3

♣ A 6 5 4 2

**West is in 4♠. North leads the ♣Q. How do you play?**

Counting losers in declarer's hand gives seven: 3 hearts and 4 diamonds. The best chance to rid yourself of four of these is to ruff four diamonds in dummy. You get the lead back in your hand by ruffing clubs. The first two diamond ruffs in dummy and first two club ruffs in hand are with low trumps. If all goes well you make two aces and eight trump tricks.

So win the Ace of clubs and ruff a club in your hand. Then cash the Ace of diamonds (discarding a heart) and ruff a diamond in the dummy. Ruff a club, a diamond, a club (high), a diamond (high), a club (high), a diamond (high). And with luck you will then have ten tricks in front of you.

In most cases, when you crossruff you voluntarily lose trump control. In other words, when you have finished ruffing back and forth, you will have too few trumps left to draw the remaining enemy trumps.

If you have winners in side suits, it is therefore best to cash them early on in the hand, before the defence have a chance to discard the suit. Otherwise you may find the power of the trump suit working against you.

Usually it is good technique to cash side suit winners before embarking on the crossruff. If you do not, then while you are ruffing, an opponent, who is also out of the suit led, may take the opportunity to make a killing discard.