



The 'Tight Fist' Syndrome

THERE ARE various pitfalls in trump contracts that can trap the unwary. Perhaps one of the most common is the 'tight fist' syndrome when ruffing. We'll start with an easy example where brilliance in bidding may be eclipsed by a lapse in card-play. As South you do well to reach a grand slam in spades and West leads the two of diamonds:

Deal 1
 South plays in 7♠.
 West leads the ♦2.

♠ 8 6 3
 ♥ 8
 ♦ A J 8 7 6 4
 ♣ A K Q

♠ A K Q J 10 7
 ♥ A 5 2
 ♦ 3
 ♣ 7 3 2

Count – Plan – Execute. There are eleven top tricks so, as declarer, you realise that you have to ruff the two heart losers on the table. So . . . win the ace of diamonds, play off the ace of hearts, ruff a heart, cross to hand with a trump, ruff a heart. We are down to:

♠ —
 ♥ —
 ♦ J 8 7 6 4
 ♣ A K Q

♠ A K Q J 7
 ♥ —
 ♦ —
 ♣ 7 3 2

If you now ruff a diamond to hand with the seven of spades West overruffs with the nine! One down. Is it unlucky that the diamonds break 5–1 and that West has the nine of spades? No, it's just bad play. You can afford to ruff that diamond with a high trump (the ace of spades for choice – if you've got it, flaunt it) and then draw trumps. Why ruff low? The only reason can be that you are too tight-fisted to 'waste' a top trump on the menial task of ruffing a low card. From the days of whist comes an appropriate aphorism: 'Don't send a boy on a man's errand.'

The same principle of ruffing high when you can afford to do so applies to ruffs in the dummy:

Deal 2
 South plays in 4♣.
 West leads the ♠A.

♠ 9 8 2
 ♥ A 5
 ♦ J 8 6 3 2
 ♣ 9 7 5

♠ A K Q J 10 6
 ♥ K 7 3 2
 ♦ Void
 ♣ J 8 4

The defenders lead three rounds of clubs and try to cash the ace of diamonds, ruffed in the South hand. Now, plan the play from here. Count – Plan – Execute. The formula never varies.

You can see that you can ruff two heart losers in the dummy, so should play off the top hearts and lead another. Now, it is sheer carelessness to ruff the third heart with the two of spades. If East is also out of hearts he will overruff and the deal will be transferred to the archives of the Guinness Book of Butchered Contracts.

The hand is secure if declarer ruffs his two hearts with the eight of spades and the nine of spades as East will not be able to overruff.



This deal follows similar lines but is more subtle (we'll show all four hands for a change). West leads the king of spades against your contract of 4♥. How should you play?

Deal 3
 South plays in 4♥.
 West leads the ♠K.

♠ 8 7 4
 ♥ A 7 3
 ♦ Q 9 8 5 3
 ♣ 10 6

♠ K Q J 9
 ♥ 8 2
 ♦ K 6
 ♣ J 9 8 4 2

♠ 10 6 3 2
 ♥ 6 5 4
 ♦ A J 10 4
 ♣ Q 3

♠ A 5
 ♥ K Q J 10 9
 ♦ 7 2
 ♣ A K 7 5

As declarer you spot three obvious losers in spades and diamonds, so you should be able to see that you have to ruff your losing clubs in the dummy. Accordingly, after winning the spade lead with the ace of spades, you should cash the top clubs and ruff one in the dummy – but with which trump? As you are intending to ruff *two* clubs, you should ruff the first low club with the seven of hearts and the second with the ace of hearts. If you carelessly ruff the third round of clubs with the three of hearts, you will be overruffed with the lowly heart four and suffer an embarrassing defeat.

In detail, then, win the ace of spades, play off the ace and king of clubs, ruff a club with the seven of hearts, play the

three of hearts to hand, ruff the last club with the ace of hearts. That's six tricks and you have four top trumps to come.

Now, this principle can be extended to more difficult hands. I'm sure the editor has space to fit this one in . . . !

Deal 4
South plays in 4♥.
West leads the ♦A.

♠ A 8 6 5 3
 ♥ K 10
 ♦ 8 7 4 3
 ♣ K 6

♠ 4
 ♥ A Q 9 8 7 6
 ♦ J 6
 ♣ A 7 5 3

The defenders play off three rounds of diamonds, the last being ruffed by South. Now, to be certain of making 4♥ you must ruff the two club losers in the dummy. So, king of clubs, ace of clubs, ruff a club . . . with what?

If you try the ten of hearts, then East just might be able to over-ruff with the jack of hearts and return a trump, leaving you with a club loser.

The defence has slipped badly by not leading trumps, you mustn't give them another chance. To be completely secure you must ruff the third round of clubs with the king of hearts, return to hand by cashing the ace of spades and ruffing a spade (actually, you ought to ruff that high as well) and ruff the last club with the ten of hearts. The defenders will make the jack of hearts at some time at their convenience but the power of your trump intermediates means that you can lose no other trick. Your losers are confined to two diamonds and a trump. □

★ SMALL ADVERT ★ SMALL ADVERT ★

**ANTIQUARIAN AND
 OUT-OF-PRINT BOOKS
 AND EPHEMERA FROM
 CARD GAME BOOKS**

Bridge books, other card games and playing cards for sale. 2nd catalogue available Sept/Oct from Gordon Bickley ☎ 07530 553594 email: gordonarf@aol.com

THE EBU & BRIDGE OVERSEAS MALTA CONGRESS

4 – 10 February 2014

Victoria Hotel, Sliema, Malta



- ♦ Bridge England Sim Pairs
- ♦ Open Pairs
- ♦ Pivot Teams
- ♦ Men's, Ladies' and Mixed Pairs
- ♦ Swiss Pairs and Swiss Teams

Blue-
pointed
events

Green-
pointed
Swiss
events

Bridge Fees: £128

EBU Comps Department

☎ 01296 317 203 / 219

E-mail: comps@ebu.co.uk

**Attendance at the congress is exclusive
 to delegates booking their package
 with Bridge Overseas**

For travel and accommodation please email
lindsey@bridgeoverseas.co.uk or contact



BRIDGE OVERSEAS

☎ **0800 034 6246**

*A range of optional excursions will be available to book
 at the venue to complement the bridge programme*