



The Crossruff

THERE are many players who enjoy this particular topic – they just love ruffing losers in both hands and do so with gay abandon, often without thinking of the consequences. Put another way, they ruff in both hands without Counting and Planning. In order that the groundwork for this topic is set with firm foundations I am going to start with a deal that constitutes a warning (and a contrast with others in this article). How should you play 6♠ after West starts the defence by leading the jack of hearts and continues with the ten of hearts when you let that hold?

Deal 1
South plays in 6♠.
West leads the ♥J.

♠ A J 10 8
♥ K 5 4 3 2
♦ A 9 6
♣ 2

♠ K Q 4 3
♥ 8
♦ K Q J 10 3
♣ A J 7

Count – Plan – Execute. You can count four spades, five diamonds and a club 'on top'. You have already ruffed a heart in hand by the end of trick two so make that five spade tricks, five diamond tricks and the ace of clubs. That's eleven tricks; where's the twelfth?

The key mistake would be to ruff a club on table. With these 4-4 fits it is a cardinal error to ruff in both hands, a point made in the last article in this series. Since you have already ruffed in the South hand, it is dummy that is the long trump hand and it is that length that needs to be preserved for drawing trumps. Make no mistake on a hand like this: when you have a side-suit

that you need to enjoy (here it's diamonds) you have to draw trumps sometime. The twelfth trick can only come from a second ruff in the South hand so that you make six trump tricks, five diamonds and the ace of clubs.

The winning line is to cross to the ten of spades at trick three, ruff a heart with the queen of spades, cash the king of spades, cross to the ace of diamonds, draw trumps and run the diamonds.

Now compare and contrast this deal, played in a game contract:

Deal 2
South plays in 4♠.
West leads the ♦Q.

♠ A J 9 6
♥ 8
♦ K 4 2
♣ A J 5 4 3

♠ 3
♥ K 10 9 7 4 3
♦ Q J 10 9
♣ 7 6

♠ 7 5 4
♥ Q 5
♦ A 6 5
♣ K 10 9 8 2

♠ K Q 10 8 2
♥ A J 6 2
♦ 8 7 3
♣ Q

The queen of diamonds lead makes it clear that the king of diamonds is waste paper and, sure enough, East-West cash the first three diamond tricks, finishing in the East hand. East, with nothing better to do, now switches to a trump, won by dummy's six of spades. What now? Well, Count and Plan would be a good start . . . You have five spade tricks and two aces on top, so are three tricks short. Note that you have no side-suit to cash, unlike in Deal 1, so there is no reason to draw trumps. Here is the *locus classicus* for a crossruff – the more so since all your trumps are high and there is no danger of an over-ruff.

South wins the six of spades, therefore, cashes the ace of hearts and the ace of clubs

and just ruffs everything in sight. Contract made. In essence, because there are three heart ruffs on table, the trick count comes from five spades in hand, three ruffs on table and two aces. Put another way, eight trump tricks and two aces.

Let's try another, avoiding a common pitfall . . .

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

♠ A K 5 4
♥ K J 9 3
♦ J
♣ 6 5 4 3

♠ Q 6
♥ 8 7 5 4
♦ A Q 10 8 3
♣ 9 7

♠ J 10 9 7 3
♥ 2
♦ K 5 2
♣ Q J 10 8

♠ 8 2
♥ A Q 10 6
♦ 9 7 6 4
♣ A K 2

West leads a low trump against 4♥ and South must carefully count his tricks having won trick one with the six of hearts. Two spades, two clubs are on top so somehow he must make six trump tricks. This can only be achieved by making two ruffs in one hand or the other. It may appear that the best way of doing this is to cash two top spades and ruff a spade in hand, prepared to ruff both of dummy's spades in the closed hand. Nice try, no cigar. On the third spade West pitches a club and South suddenly finds that he can't cash the ace and king of clubs anymore and 4♥ fails. If declarer wants to ruff spades in hand he must take the precaution of cashing the ♣A-K first – to prevent a damaging discard by a defender.

However, the best play in 4♥ is to win the trump lead and concede a diamond. Win the trump return, cash the ace and king of spades and the ace and king of

clubs, and then crossruff diamonds and spades for ten tricks.

The 'rule' then (make that a 'guiding principle') is to cash the outside winners before embarking on a crossruff. Try this next deal, played in a slam.

Deal 4
 South plays in 6♣.
 West leads the ♣K.

♠ Q J 8 7
 ♥ 7
 ♦ 8 5 4
 ♣ A 9 8 3 2

♠ A K 10 9
 ♥ A 9 6 4 3
 ♦ A K Q
 ♣ 7

diamonds (hoping that they stand up), cash the ace of hearts and go for a complete crossruff. In 6♣ that's pure, unadulterated greed. You need twelve tricks, not thirteen, and to that end you should cash just two diamonds and two aces before embarking on the crossruff. The full deal:

Deal 4

♠ Q J 8 7
 ♥ 7
 ♦ 8 5 4
 ♣ A 9 8 3 2

♠ 6 5 4 2
 ♥ Q
 ♦ 9 2
 ♣ K Q J 10 5 4

♠ 3
 ♥ K J 10 8 5 2
 ♦ J 10 7 6 3
 ♣ 6

♠ A K 10 9
 ♥ A 9 6 4 3
 ♦ A K Q
 ♣ 7

West leads the king of clubs against 6♣ and South should settle down to Count and to Plan. There are, apparently, five tricks outside of spades (two aces and three diamonds) and a complete crossruff will bring in eight trump tricks. (South has four losing hearts he can ruff on table and four clubs he can ruff in hand). So it's overtrick time?

Not so fast! In a contract of 7♣ the right play is to take the ace of clubs, cash three

Note what happens if you try a crossruff too early: if you ruff a heart on table at trick three, West will pitch a diamond. Oops! One off. If, on the other hand, you try three rounds of diamonds West will ruff and will (should, anyway) return a trump to put paid to your crossruff. True, a trump lead beats 6♣ but that wasn't within the terms of reference.

The 'rule' should read: cash *sufficient* outside winners before playing a crossruff. □

CLUB PLAYER'S BIDDING QUIZ

ON each of the following problems, you are West. What should you bid with each hand on the given auction at pairs, Love All?

Julian Pottage gives his answers on page 42.



Hand 1

♠ A 9 5 4
 ♥ 7
 ♦ K Q 9 7 5 2
 ♣ J 6

W N E S
 ?

Hand 2

♠ 10 2
 ♥ J 10 2
 ♦ A K J 6 3
 ♣ J 9 7

W N E S
 Pass 2♥¹ Dble 3♣
 ?
¹ Weak

Hand 3

♠ A 8 6 5 4
 ♥ Q J 6
 ♦ A K Q
 ♣ K 5

W N E S
 ? Pass Pass 1♥

Hand 4

♠ A 3
 ♥ K J 9 2
 ♦ J 10 4 3
 ♣ K Q 2

W N E S
 1NT Pass 3♥ Pass
 ?

Hand 5

♠ A 9 6 2
 ♥ A Q J 8 5 4
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 8 3

W N E S
 1♥ Pass 2♦ Pass
 2♥ Pass 3♣ Pass
 ?

Hand 6

♠ A 7
 ♥ K Q J 4 2
 ♦ Q 6 4 3
 ♣ A Q

W N E S
 ? 1♦ 3♣¹
¹ Weak

IBPA BRIDGE PERSONALITY OF 2013



Photo: Elisabeth van Ettinger (New in Bridge)

THE International Bridge Press Association's 'Bridge Personality of the Year' award was presented at the 41st World Teams Championships in Bali to Andrew Robson (right in the photo, with IBPA President Patrick Jourdain), to mark his appointment as an OBE in the Queen's 2013 New Year's Day Honours List for his services to bridge and charity. Andrew had received the IBPA Sportsmanship Award in 2002 'for his spectacular recovery from adversity' after a terrible accident while fellwalking. Robson also has the distinction of having received the IBPA award for Best Defence of the Year both as a player (1999) and as a journalist (2002).