

Scissors Coup

By Henry Jackson

Based on Bridge Guys Article with
Definitions from Simon Cocheme

Definition

coup \ 'kū \ *n, pl* **coups** \ 'küz \

[Fr., blow, stroke]

1 : a brilliant, sudden, and usu. highly successful stroke or act **2** : COUP D'ÉTAT

Definition

A Scissors Coup is a strategy play, especially by the declarer, targeted at disrupting the line of communication between the opponents in order to prevent a ruff, which will defeat the contract.

Example 1

♠ A10
♥ J973
♦ J7
♣ KQ1076

East opens the auction with 1 Diamond. The final contract is 4 Hearts. South is the declarer. West leads a small Diamond, which is won by East, who returns the Club 3. South, before playing to the first trick, counts only 3 losers: 1 Heart and 2 Diamonds. The Club 3 has to be a singleton. What can be done to prevent West from gaining the lead and giving East a club ruff?

♠ K96
♥ KQ1042
♦ 92
♣ AJ4

Example 1 Problem

♠ A10
♥ J973
♦ J7
♣ KQ1076

The problem is that when South begins to pull trump, East wins, returns a Diamond to West, who then leads a Club, which East can ruff for the setting trick. Note that East likely has the Heart A for his opening bid. If West has it, you are going down.

♠ K96
♥ KQ1042
♦ 92
♣ AJ4

Example 1 – All Hands

♠ A10
♥ J973
♦ J7
♣ KQ1076

♠ 8753
♥ 65
♦ Q64
♣ 9852

♠ QJ42
♥ A8
♦ AK10853
♣ 3

♠ K96
♥ KQ1042
♦ 92
♣ AJ4

Example 1 Solution

♠ A10
♥ J973
♦ J7
♣ KQ1076

The strategy behind the Scissors Coup is to cut the line of communication regarding the Diamonds. Therefore, South, after winning the Club lead by East with the Ace, plays to the Spade Ace in the dummy, returns to the Spade King in his hand, plays the Spade 9 and throws the second Diamond instead of ruffing. Defenders get only 1 diamond, 1 spade and 1 heart – the ruff is avoided by cutting communications in diamonds!

♠ K96
♥ KQ1042
♦ 92
♣ AJ4

Example 2

♠ 763
♥ Q9652
♦ KQ
♣ 653

In this deal, East is the dealer, both sides are vulnerable, and East opens 3 Spades. South jump overcalls to 5 Clubs, showing a very strong holding. West immediately doubles, and all pass. West, on lead, decides to lead 10, showing a singleton or high-low for a possible ruff, which would defeat the contract. South, the declarer, plays low from the dummy, East plays the King and South the Ace.

♠ A4
♥ A
♦ A82
♣ KQJ9872

Example 2 Concerns

♠ 763
♥ Q9652
♦ KQ
♣ 653

West certainly has the club A for his double. West likely also has the Heart King. If East has 7 spades the contract is safe losing only 1 Club and one Spade. But if East has only 6 Spades, West can win the Club A, lead a Spade and a Spade continuation can set up the Club 10 when South ruffs high. What can be done?

♠ A4
♥ A
♦ A82
♣ KQJ9872

Example 2 – All Hands

	♠ 763	
	♥ Q9652	
	♦ KQ	
	♣ 653	
♠ 102		♠ KQJ985
♥ KJ104		♥ 873
♦ 9743		♦ J1065
♣ A104		♣
	♠ A4	
	♥ A	
	♦ A82	
	♣ KQJ9872	

Example 2 Solution

♠ 763

♥ Q9652

♦ KQ

♣ 653

South must, at trick two, play the Heart Ace. At trick three, South leads a Diamond to the King (or Queen). At trick four, South leads the heart Queen and discards the Spade 4 when East cannot cover. This is also known as a Loser-on Loser Play, but more importantly, South has disrupted the line of communication between East and West by voiding his holding of Spades and Hearts, and has successfully performed a Scissors Coup.

♠ A4

♥ A

♦ A82

♣ KQJ9872

Other Coups by Simon Cocheme

- **Merrimac Coup** – A defender sacrifices a high card, usually a king to remove an entry to dummy before its long suit is set up.
- **Deschappelles Coup** – A defender leads or discards a high card to create an entry to partner's hand.
- **Bath Coup** – Declarer holding A-J-X plays low when the king is led hoping to win 2 tricks later.

Other Coups by Simon Cocheme

Continued

- **Alcatraz Coup (cheat)** – Declarer with K-J-T in dummy and A-X-X in hand leads the J from dummy and discards another suit. As soon as West follows, he discovers the revoke and corrects it with A or X depending on whether West played the Q.
- **Briar Patch Coup** – Opening your weaker 4-card minor in an attempt to dissuade your opponents from leading the suit.

Other Coups by Simon Cocheme

Continued

- **Senior Coup** – With dummy holding K432 and declarer holding Q5, lead low from dummy and win the queen. Then return to dummy and lead low again. East may have Ax or be afraid declarer has the jack.
- **Crocodile Coup** – Defender in 2nd position rises with a higher card than seems necessary and prevents partner from winning the trick and becoming endplayed.

Rare Devil's Coup

	♠ 7	
	♥ K 9	
♠ 8		♠ —
♥ Q 7		♥ J 8 6
	♠ —	
	♥ A 10 5	

Declarer leads spade 7 from dummy and wins the 10 if East ruffs low and wins the last 2 tricks with A and K. If West ruffs high, declarer wins the A and finesses East for the queen. Declarer showed great Patience by not drawing trumps earlier!

Still More Coups!

- **Elvis Coup** – After an over-eager player cashes an unsupported ace, his right hand opponent's king wins a trick. The king lives!
- **Biltcliffe Coup** – Named by David Bird. After opponents stop in part score, you reopen the bidding, they bid game, you double and they make it! The grand version requires two reopens before the fatal double.

They Are Still Coming!

- **Dentist's Coup** – The extraction of an exit card from an opponent's hand before throwing him in for an endplay.
- **Ostrich Coup** – Declarer takes ruffs in the hand with longer trumps and gains nothing.
- **Hanged Man Coup** – Declarer blocks entry so there is no entry to winners.

Not Finished Yet!

- **Coup en Passant** – Declarer plays a card through a defender with the master trump promoting his trump if the defender ruffs and discarding or ruffing if not.
- **Cambriolage Coup** – At trick 13 one defender ruffs his partner's winner. Well played!

French Coups

- **Coup d'Etat** – After a 2C opening, partner bids 4 notrump seizing control of the auction!
- **Coup de Theatre** – A flamboyant play such as ruffing partner's ace.
- **Coup de Grace** – Nothing to do with bridge. Possibly French for “lawnmower”.