

Bridge is a game of Pattern recognition. When making a plan, declarer must decide if it's best to...

- establish one suit
- ruff losers
- eliminate a suit
- crossruff

TIP OF THE WEEK: LOSER-ON-LOSER TECHNIQUE

A Loser-on-Loser play is any play where you discard a losing card on an opponent's winner, instead of ruffing.

Reasons to execute a 'Loser-on-Loser' Play

- . to maintain trump control
- . to transfer the ruff to a "safer suit" (i.e in order to crossruff later in the hand)
- . to keep the lead in the safe hand
- . to avoid opponent having an opportunity to ruff
- . to rectify the count for a subsequent squeeze play

Join, Max Chavet as he demonstrates several Loser-on-Loser plays.

CardPlay Technique in ♠♥ Bridge ♦♣

**LOSER
ON
LOSER**

or knowing when
NOT to ruff

<https://youtu.be/58AXrKh8yZ8>

Michael Berkowitz presents a few Loser-on-Loser examples in the following article.

www.larryco.com › bridge-articles › loser-on-loser-plays
Loser on Loser plays - Bridge Articles - Bridge with Larry Cohen

LOSER
ON A LOSER
or
To ruff or not to ruff
by Barbara Seagram
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Most of the following hands by Eddie Kantar, along with much of the commentary, www.kantarbridge.com

1

	♠ J54	
	♥ Q108	
	♦ AKQ32	
	♣ 65	
♠ AKQ10		♠ 9862
♥ 6532		♥ 74
♦ 75		♦ 986
♣ QJ9		♣ K1042
	♠ 73	
	♥ AKJ9	
	♦ J104	
	♣ A873	

Dealer: North

<https://youtu.be/ozKUaDOysBk>

Barbara Seagrams has given me permission to share some loser-on-loser hands in this Blast.

HAND # 2

	S 84	
	H 852	
	D KJ2	
	C AQ765	
S K QJ1073		S A6
H 10		H J96
D 1098		D Q765
C J94		C K1032
	S 952	
	H AKQ743	
	D A43	
	C 8	

E-W		VUL		N-S		NON-VUL	
S	W	N	E				
1H	2S	3H	P				
4H	P	P	P				
Opening lead: Spade King.							

West leads the S King against South's 4H contract. South stops to plan the play and count his losers, as we all learned to do at mother's knee. The last time I asked a class "Where do we count our losers?" one lady replied without hesitation: "In the singles' bar!" Of course, that wasn't quite the answer I had hoped for. We count losers in declarer's hand.

Declarer has three potential spade losers, one potential diamond loser, no club losers and no heart losers. South's up-front plan is to ruff a spade in dummy and consider taking the diamond finesse.

On West's lead of the SK, East overtakes with the SA and leads back the S6. West wins with the S10 (always win from the bottom but lead from the top) and returns the SQ. At this point, South knows that East started with a doubleton SA-6, or else he wouldn't have overtaken the SK at Trick 1. If South now ruffs the third round of spades in dummy, even with the H8, the odds of East overruffing are huge. It is wrong to ruff in dummy when you know you'll be overruffed.

Let's look at the diamond suit through declarer's eyes. He may plan to try the diamond finesse, but finesses only work 50% of the time. Since he may have to lose a diamond anyway, how about pitching the D2 from dummy on the third round of spades? West cannot now continue with another spade, as declarer could ruff it in his hand with a small heart.

West shifts to the D10. Declarer tries inserting the DJ from dummy, to no avail. East covers with the DQ and declarer wins with the DA. Declarer now draws two rounds of trumps, hoping to find the hearts breaking 2-2. West shows out on the second round. Now declarer plays the D3 to the DK. He then cashes the CA, ruffs a club in his hand, ruffs the D4 in dummy and ruffs a small club back to his hand. Finally, declarer draws East's last trump and claims.

If declarer had trumped the third round of spades in dummy, he would have lost that trick and would have had to rely on the diamond finesse. Down one. Pitching a D from dummy instead of ruffing, thereby losing that trick is called playing "a loser on a loser."

Note that it would be unnatural for South to attempt a club finesse holding only a singleton club (a non-loser) in his hand. If he attempts a club finesse while holding a singleton, he might end up turning the *non-loser* into a loser!

The **Loser on Loser Play** is a play made by the declarer, used most often in trump suit contracts, but can also be made in no trump contracts. In order to perform a loser on loser play, declarer discards a losing card (one that he will lose later anyway) on an opponent's winner, instead of winning it with a high card or trumping it. He will lose that trick but gain a trick in the long run.

NOTE:

If given a choice, when discarding a loser, discard an immediate loser first rather than an eventual loser.

i.e. Discard a quick loser, not a slow loser.

HAND 3

	NORTH		
	S A7652		
	H ---		
	D 765		
	C AJ876		
WEST		EAST	
S 98		S ---	
H 96		H AQJ105432	
D KJ32		D 1098	
C Q10943		C K2	
	SOUTH		
	S KQJ1043		
	H K87		
	D AQ4		
	C 5		

W	N	E	S
Pass	Pass	4 H	4 S
Pass	6 S	Pass	Pass
Pass			
Opening lead from West: H9			

When West leads the H 9, South must count his losers.

No S losers, 3 potential H losers (they cannot win tricks all by themselves so you have to initially call them losers, otherwise you will fail to make a plan on how to deal with them).

2 D losers and 0 C losers. 5 losers. You can only afford 1 loser so you have four too many losers. You can ruff three H's in the dummy but what will you do about the D situation? Do you really wish to rely on the D finesse? This will only work 50% of the time.

Let's see what happens if you fail to ruff the opening H lead in dummy? Try pitching a D from dummy instead. East will now play his H Ace and your H K is now a good card. If East returns a D, you must WIN the D Ace immediately. Now you can pull trump and then pitch another D from dummy on your high H K. Making 6!

HAND # 9

	North	
	S. ♠109	
	H. 4	
	D. 108632	
	C. 10943	
West		East
S. 532		S. A
H. AKJ107		H. Q96532
D. K4		D. AJ7
C. 765		C. AQ8
	South	
	S. KQ8764	
	H. 8	
	D. Q95	
	C. KJ2	

South	West	North	East	
1S	2H	Pass	6H!	
All Pass				Opening lead: SJ

Bidding Commentary: There are many ways to bid the East hand, but it's not unreasonable to leap to slam facing a 2 level overcall. Most two level overcalls show opening bid values. This is about as light as they come- just East's luck.

Play Commentary: EW have a combined total of 28 HCP. This means North-South have 12 HCP (the remainder). This is the Rule of 40!) Normally an opening bidder will have 12 (plus some distribution), but after N leads the S J, South figures to have only 11. In other words, South has the CK and the DQ. Finesses in those suits are doomed to fail- West must think of something else.

Further Play Commentary: Using the bidding as a guide, West crosses to his hand twice in hearts to ruff spades, stripping that suit, and continues with the DK, over to the DA and then the DJ disdaining the finesse that cannot work. When South produces the expected DQ, West discards a club. South has the lead and is not a happy camper. A club is out as it goes into the AQ, and a spade, a ruff-sluff is not better. Assuming a spade return, West discards yet another club and ruffs in dummy. West remains with one club and dummy has the ace. 6H bid and made.

Use the bidding to guide you in the play. Assume an opening bidder has at least 12 HCP (might be 11) and stay away from finesses that can't work.

Hand # 16

	North	
	S. A106	
	H. K97	
	D. A96	
	C. Q983	
West		East
S. K83		S. -
H. 102		H. AQJ864
D. J432		D. Q107
C. J754		C. K1062
	South	
	S. QJ97542	
	H. 53	
	D. K85	
	C. A	

North	East	South	West
1C	1H	1S	Pass
2S	3H	4S	All Pass

Opening lead: H10

Bidding Commentary: As South, your hand improves once you know partner has at least two spades. N may not rebid 1NT with a s'ton S.

Lead Commentary: If W had 3, W would lead a small Heart.

Defensive Commentary: As East, if dummy plays low, signal encouragement with the H8 and when partner leads a second heart, cover dummy's card and play a third heart putting partner in a position to overtrump declarer.

Play Commentary: As South, there is a reasonable chance that West has the SK and will overtrump if you trump high. If this happens, you are stuck with a diamond loser. Discard a diamond instead? It's a sure loser anyway. Now you can win any return and take the spade finesse. With ten spades between the two hands, the percentage play (by far) is to take the finesse. It is wrong to play East for the singleton king unless the bidding absolutely tells you that East must have that card or it has fallen on the floor face up! .

As declarer, when there is a clear danger of being overtrumped (third heart), consider discarding a loser instead, particularly if the suit cannot be continued effectively.

ADVANCED LEARNERS

Gavin Wolpert

The screenshot shows a Bridge game interface. At the top left is a bidding table:

West	North	East	South
PASS	PASS	PASS	1♣
PASS	1NT	PASS	2♣
PASS	2♣	PASS	PASS
PASS			

North's hand (Robot (Dummy)) is shown as: 8♠, 6♠, A♥, 10♥, 8♥, 6♥, J♣, 8♣, 8♦.

South's hand (Wolpert Bridge) is shown as: K♠, Q♠, J♠, 10♠, J♥, 4♥, A♣, 5♣, 2♣.

The dummy's hand (Robot) is shown as: 6♦, 5♦, 10♦, 7♣, 10♣, 7♣.

At the bottom right, the game status is: NS: 1 / 8 EW: 2, S: 2♣. There is also an "Undo" button and a message input field.

A video feed of Gavin Wolpert is visible in the top right corner.

<https://youtu.be/zyCWs9UOGKQ>

LARRY COHEN
“LOSER-ON-LOSER-SQUARED”

<https://www.larryco.com/bridge-articles/loser-on-loser-squared>