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This section is on ruffing high in dummy and in hand to avoid being over-ruffed.

Avoiding over-ruffs (ACOL version)	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ AK4	
	♥ J743	
	♦ J8	
	♣ Q742	
West		East
♠		♠ Q632
♥ 652		♥ QT98
♦ KQT964		♦ 7
♣ AK83		♣ J965
	South	
	♠ JT9875	
	♥ AK	
	♦ A532	
	♣ T	

This collection of six deals is the second set on the topic of playing carefully when ruffing losers. In many of these (more difficult) examples there is the risk of an over-ruff by the opponents so you need to know when you have to ruff with a high trump to prevent that from happening.

We also introduce a twist in the play of some of these deals - sometimes you may choose not to ruff at all!

This deal (Hand 1) needs careful timing. There is a slight variation in the play that follows from the usual **Counting** and **Planning**.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	1♠
2♦	X	P	2♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♣ A

You reach a reasonable contract of 4♠ after West has overcalled 2♦, telling you something about the adverse distribution.

West cashes a top Club and switches to the ♦K to your ♦A. You should be able to see that you need to ruff a couple of Diamonds on the table – if you attempt to draw trumps you'd have three Diamond losers you couldn't get rid of.

So... you must win the ♦A and play back a Diamond, paving the way for a Diamond ruff (or two) on table. West persists with Diamonds, forcing you to ruff high in dummy (you can't afford to ruff low, get over-ruffed and see a trump be returned).

East alarms you by pitching two Hearts on these Diamonds so you hastily cash the ♥A K before East can throw any more away. Although this sets up the ♥J on table it's of no use to you! You ruff the last Diamond on table – again with a high trump – and your hand is only trumps. You can force out the ♠Q but must make five of the last six tricks for your contract.



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Avoiding over-ruffs (ACOL version)	Contract: 5D
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♦
4♠	5♦	P	P
P			


Lead: ♥ A

You are forced into 5♦ after an adventurous auction and West attempts to cash the ♥A K Q.

To make this contract you need to ruff three Spades on table (the Club finesse is odds against to succeed with West holding at least ten major-suit cards). So drawing trumps is out (you need to keep three trumps on table) and you have to be careful to ruff your losing Spades with dummy's ♦8, ♦9 and ♦A as East can surely have no more than one Spade.

Putting your **Plan** into operation you ruff the third round of Hearts, cash the ♠A, ruff a Spade "high" on table, come to hand with a trump to hand (you can afford to play exactly one round!) ruff a Spade with the ♦9, play off the ♣A and ruff a Club to get back to the closed hand.

As you can afford to ruff the Club high you should do exactly that – there is only one trump out and it's higher than the ♦5 in the closed hand. The last Spade can be ruffed with the ♦A, a Club ruffed high for entry and – finally – the ♦K and ♦5 cashed.

	North	
	♠ 9	
	♥ J62	
	♦ A983	
	♣ AJ754	
West		East
♠ KQJT764		♠ 8
♥ AKQ		♥ T9873
♦ 64		♦ 7
♣ 9		♣ KT8632
	South	
	♠ A532	
	♥ 54	
	♦ KQJT52	
	♣ Q	

This is an exciting deal, arising out of an aggressive pre-empt by an opponent.


Can you bring home the bacon in an adventurous contract?



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Avoiding over-ruffs 2 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ 62	
	♥ A9	
	♦ QT62	
	♣ QJ873	
West		East
♠ QJT85		♠ 93
♥ 4		♥ J532
♦ KJ95		♦ 8743
♣ AT9		♣ K65
	South	
	♠ AK74	
	♥ KQT876	
	♦ A	
	♣ 42	

This deal merely completes a set of three (Hands 1-3) on the topic of ruffing high where appropriate.

Here, the auction gives you a clue to the layout of the cards - you just have to play with care to steer your ship through choppy seas into the calm water of the harbour.

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1♥
1♠	X	P	3♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♠ Q

You reach 4♥ after West has stuck his oar into the auction with a 1♠ overcall. (This tells you that Spades are 5-2 or even 6-1 and may guide your line of play).

West leads the ♠Q and you have to count winners and losers. You can't count ten winners (at best you have two Spades, six Hearts and one Diamond) so must ruff your two losing Spades on table.

Is that it? Well, not exactly. You can't afford to ruff the third round of Spades low (with the ♥9) as you risk being over-ruffed by East. In itself that wouldn't matter much if East did something wooden, such as return a Diamond, but a trump return, removing dummy's ♥A, would be fatal to your cause.

To prevent this you must cash the ♠A K at tricks one and two (if East ruffs the second Spade then that's tough bananas – you are going down) and ruff the next Spade **high** on table. Coming to hand with the ♦A you can now ruff the last Spade with the ♥9, not caring whether it wins the trick or not.


As it happens. East over-ruffs with the ♥J and the defenders take two Club tricks but that's it – game over. You have ten tricks (seven Hearts, the ♠A K and the ♦A)



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Avoiding over-ruffs 2 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North	
	♠ 642	
	♥ A8	
	♦ 98	
	♣ Q86542	
West		East
♠ 8		♠ 753
♥ J96432		♥ Q7
♦ QJT4		♦ K6532
♣ K7		♣ AT9
	South	
	♠ AKQJT9	
	♥ KT5	
	♦ A7	
	♣ J3	

Here you play in an easy-looking contract. However, the cards may not lie well for you and you may need to think of finding a safer way through the choppy waters than the "obvious" line of play.

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1♠
P	2♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

You reach 4♠ as South and contemplate what looks to be an easy hand to play after West leads the ♦Q.

Let's **Count**... There are six Spades, two Hearts and the ♦A *on top* – that makes nine tricks. One more makes ten – and that can be obtained by ruffing a Heart on table, in the *short trump hand*.

So, the **Plan** is to draw two rounds of trumps (if they are 2-2 the contract is bomb-proof) and ruff a Heart? Good plan, but not as good as it could be.

The best play is to take one round of trumps only and then play three rounds of Hearts. Noting the suspicious-looking ♥Q on the second round from East (although we don't trust the fellow, do we? He is always doing things like that) it is best play to throw away a Diamond instead of ruffing. This is a simple exchange of losers. We don't lose a Diamond now, we lose a Heart instead. Well, you know the age-old saying: "Fair exchange is no robbery". Now it is a simple matter to ruff a Diamond on table with little fear that it will be over-ruffed. That gives you seven Spade tricks, the ♥A K and the ♦A for ten in all. Ker-ching.


True, a 6-2 Heart break is way against the odds and it is unlucky to find a deal where East could over-ruff dummy on the third round of Hearts. Still, the best bridge players are the most prudent, they are the sort who always pack an umbrella on warm and sunny summer days...



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Avoiding over-ruffs 2 ACOL	Contract: 6C
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ 75	
	♥ 42	
	♦ JT9863	
	♣ K32	
West		East
♠ KQJT		♠ 98432
♥ J9875		♥ QT
♦ Q4		♦ K752
♣ 95		♣ 86
	South	
	♠ A6	
	♥ AK63	
	♦ A	
	♣ AQJT74	

Here you arrive in a high-level contract and must make the most of the meagre dummy to dispose of your losers.

The hint is that this hand has something in common with Hand 4.

West	North	East	South
-	P	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	3♣
P	3♦	P	3♥
P	5♣	P	6♣
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ K

As South you arrive in the ambitious contract of 6♣ and West starts off with the ♠K lead.

You start by **Counting** and **Planning** and can see - fairly quickly - that you have (apparently) a certain Spade loser and a couple of Heart losers, which must be ruffed on the table. Remember, losers must be *trumped* or *dumped* and there is no obvious dumping ground for your losers.

The main danger to the contract is an overruff in Hearts and that danger can be snuffed out by a neat *loser-on-loser* play, in similar vein to Hand 4.

At trick one you take the ♠A and play three rounds of Hearts. On the third round, rather than ruff, you should throw a losing Spade. Now it is easy enough to manoeuvre to ruff a losing Spade with a low trump and the last Heart with the ♠K. Easy when you see it and not so easy when you don't...


Can you spot the winning defence? It's an instructive point.



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Avoiding over-ruffs 2 ACOL	Contract: 6S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ J52	
	♥ 42	
	♦ 876542	
	♣ 63	
West		East
♠ 73		♠ 864
♥ KJ6		♥ QT8753
♦ KQJ9		♦ T3
♣ QT72		♣ 98
	South	
	♠ AKQT9	
	♥ A9	
	♦ A	
	♣ AKJ54	

On this last deal you pick up a real monster hand. Just how high should you bid? Can you make the resulting, ambitious contract?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	2♣
P	2♦	P	2♠
P	2NT	P	3♣
P	4♠	P	6♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ K

This is a massive hand as South and, after a slight bidding misunderstanding (North thought he was showing you a heap of rubbish, you thought he had a useful card or two) you arrive in a thin slam. West, confident that you will go down (but not confident enough to Double) leads the ♦K.

Now, let's **Count** and **Plan**. Making a mistake in a slam contract will be expensive. It's a good idea to take your time.

Winners? Well, we've got a few: Five Spades, one Heart, one Diamond and two Clubs. That's nine. A good start but three more are needed. Clearly we can ruff Clubs on table and we might set them up. If they split 3-3 then three rounds of Clubs, ruffing, would bring down the ♣Q and give us four Club tricks and a ruff in dummy to boot. Nice.

However, suppose Clubs don't break 3-3? Is there a Plan B?

Best play is to try the Clubs immediately, by cashing the ♣AK and leading a third one. If the ♣Q has appeared by now we can relax but no, it doesn't. So what do we do? Well, we could ruff high or we could throw a Heart – ruffing low would be poor play. Let's throw a Heart and see what East does. He shows out and so West plays a trump. Too late, my friend! We can now manage to ruff a Club high and a Heart low in dummy and suddenly the South hand is high. Wow. 6♠ made.

West is crestfallen. "I had 12 points, you know. I felt sure that would go down", he said. North, never one to offer a word of solace when he could stick a knife in an opponent, replies, crushingly, "If you'd have led a trump it would have."

