




A set of six deals on end-plays including ruff-and-discard eliminations. Getting opponents to open up frozen suits is the focus of this set. ACOL version.

VB#24 (Strip and) End-plays Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

	North	
	♠ 86	
	♥ 8632	
	♦ AKQ4	
	♣ Q73	
West		East
♠ QJT3		♠ 97542
♥ J9		♥ QT5
♦ 763		♦ 98
♣ AT98		♣ K64
	South	
	♠ AK	
	♥ AK74	
	♦ JT52	
	♣ J52	

This series is looking at making the opponents do the work. There is another series that follows on from this one with an identical theme.

There are many suit combinations that we would prefer not to tackle – we would like the opponents to open up the suit by being the first to lead it. Such suits are known as *frozen suits* and we have used this term in VuBridge frequently.

There are also tenace combinations (such as an A Q holding) where we would prefer the opponents to lead the suit – especially if it is around into the tenace.

The aim of this series is to *end-play* your opponents. An *end-play* is to put an opponent on lead at a time of our choosing so that he makes a lead that is advantageous to our side. That lead may be into a tenace (such as into an A Q combination) or it may open up a *frozen suit*.

Usually we have considerable preparation work to set up an end-play, by removing all the extra cards from the relevant opponents' hands. When we do this we are said to *eliminate* suits or *strip* them.

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

Lead: ♠ Q

After an invitational bidding sequence partner tables his dummy in 4♥ and West leads the ♠Q.

Our initial **Count** and **Plan** reveals some problems. It is rarely good news to have two hands that are "mirrored". (Here we are 2·4·4·3 in pattern and so is dummy; this is usually **bad** news). Also, our trump suit lacks any sort of intermediate cards and so has at least one loser.

And then there are the Clubs. There's a good chance that the ♣A and ♣K out against us will be in different hands and that's the other piece of bad news. We would lose three Club tricks if we open up the suit. All the defenders have to do is to play "second-hand low" and we'd be scuppered. True, an opponent might play the Ace or King on thin air but, then again, we aren't playing against Santa Claus and Rudolph...

Clubs is one of those suits that is best left alone. Whoever leads the suit first (declarer, dummy or the defenders) is disadvantaged by doing so. A classic *frozen suit*.

To overcome the difficulties our plan is to pull two rounds of trumps and cash all the Spades and Diamonds. If one of the opponents uses his outstanding winning trump on a winning Diamond then he will have an awkward lead. If no one ruffs we will *exit* with the boss trump. (Also known as *stick 'em on lead*).

So, in detail, we win the opening Spade lead and cash the ♥A and ♥K, relieved that trumps break 3-2. Next, we *strip* the two top Spades and start on the Diamonds. No one ruffs our master Diamonds so after four rounds of the suit we exit with a trump and put an opponent (**which** opponent doesn't matter) on lead.

As it happens, West signals with the ♠10 and when East takes his winning trump, he plays a Club. We lose just two Clubs, and make our contract. East might have led a Spade instead of opening up Clubs (a fatal **ruff-and-discard**) but then we'd pitch a Club from one hand and ruff in the other. Again, we'd only lose two Clubs.

In a suit contract one of the losing options that the defenders have is to offer us a *ruff-and-discard* (also known in the USA as a "ruff-and-sluff"). This is a lead of a suit into a double void, allowing declarer to trump in one hand and discard a loser from the other. Good news for declarer, generally very bad news for the defence.

Practice, they say, makes perfect and you will have lots of that...

Hand 1: You bid to a normal contract and find that you have too many losers. What is worse is that there is no obvious way to **trump** a loser or to **dump** one. What can be done?

By sticking one of the opposition on lead after eliminating Spades and Diamonds we give the defenders two choices, both of them fatal. "*And Queen Eleanor offered fair Rosamund the choice of poison or the dagger*"

So let's recap: A *strip and end-play* involves cashing winners and eliminating suits from the closed hand and dummy. At the crucial moment an opponent is put on lead to make a disadvantageous play.


The American term *ruff-and-sluff* (or "ruff-and-discard" as it appears in the *Encyclopaedia of Bridge*) involves an opponent leading a suit into our double void. We trump it in one hand and chuck a loser from the other. This may follow our *stick 'em on lead* card. (This term, you may be surprised to hear, does **not** appear in the *Encyclopaedia of Bridge*).



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VB#24 (Strip and) End-plays Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 2
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ J8	
	♥ T9653	
	♦ 863	
	♣ AT5	
West		East
♠ KQT4		♠ A9632
♥ 82		♥ Q
♦ Q742		♦ JT9
♣ 963		♣ Q872
	South	
	♠ 75	
	♥ AKJ74	
	♦ AK5	
	♣ KJ4	

On this deal you have a classic "find-the-lady" two-way finesse.

If you are a lucky player then you just locate the missing card with pinpoint accuracy. We mere mortals, on the other hand, hate to make guesses as we often guess wrongly. Far too often.

It would be much better if we could persuade the defence to lead the critical suit. That way we'd have no guess at all.

Can we do that?

West	North	East	South
-	-	P	1♥
P	2♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♠ K

We reach 4♥ after a simple 1♥ – 2♥ – 4♥ sequence. West leads the ♠K and we contemplate dummy with mixed feelings.

The **good news** is that partner has five trumps for us. The **bad news** is that he has only 5 points (not that we blame him for bidding 2♥, not at all) and the hands are "mirrored". Once again, having the same hand pattern as dummy (2·5·3·3 in this case) is not something we care for.

The necessary **Count** and **Plan** reveals that we have two Spade losers, a Diamond loser and a possible Club loser. On the other side of the coin we can see five Heart tricks (well, if trumps behave we can), two Diamonds and two (or three) Clubs.

Now, the normal way of eliminating losers is to **trump them** or **dump them**. When dummy and declarer have the same hand-pattern, though, there can be no dumping. Nor can there be any trumping. You can understand why we said that these "mirrored" hands are bad news.

Now, we have a two-way finesse in Clubs. If we could work out which opponent held the ♣Q it would be easy – we'd take the finesse through the guilty party and have three Club tricks.

How do we know who has the ♣Q? We **don't** and – short of peeking – we can't find out. It's a 50-50 guess and we do not like guesswork. However, if one of the opponents could be persuaded to lead the suit then we'd have three Club tricks without any hassle.

So... the opposition cash two Spades and switch to a Diamond. We take that with the ♦K and try our luck in trumps. A 2-1 break is good news (we might have coped had East held ♥Q 8 2 but not if West had three trumps) so we pull two rounds. Now the stage is set – **Stick 'em on Lead** by playing the ♦A and a low Diamond and await their next play.

With Spades eliminated at tricks one and two and Diamonds now having been stripped by playing off three rounds the defenders are in a no-win position. A Spade or Diamond lead

concedes a ruff-and-discard and a Club lead finds the lady in that suit.


In practice, East offers you a ruff-and-discard. In this case it matters not a jot whether you pitch a Club from hand and ruff on table or *vice versa*. Your Club loser disappears and the contract is yours.



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VB#24 (Strip and) End-plays Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: South	Board #: 3
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ AT5	
	♥ KQT4	
	♦ 94	
	♣ A743	
West		East
♠ K83		♠ J972
♥ 853		♥ 97
♦ QJT82		♦ K763
♣ 96		♣ QJT
	South	
	♠ Q64	
	♥ AJ62	
	♦ A5	
	♣ K852	

Another deal with a nasty, frozen suit. We could tackle the thing ourselves but we'd be so much happier if we could get East or West to do the dirty work for us.

How might we persuade them to do that?

West	North	East	South
-	-	-	1NT
P	2♣	P	2♥
P	4♥	P	P
P			

Lead: ♦ Q

Here you reach 4♥ after a Stayman auction and West leads the ♦Q.

The annoying mirror pattern of dummy and the closed hand (3-4-2-4) is a cause for concern – you can neither **dump** anything nor **trump** anything.

Counting winners and losers shows that we have no easy ride here. We have at least one Spade loser, one Diamond loser and at least one Club loser. In terms of winners we must surely make one Spade, four Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs.

With only eight winners we are going to have to conjure up a couple more. Firstly, Clubs are going to have to break 3-2; that will give us three Club winners and will hold our losses in that suit to one. Further, we are going to have to make two Spade tricks (or avoid two Spade losers – it amounts to the same thing).

If we were to play Spades ourselves we'd have an excellent chance of making two tricks in the suit. The right technique is to lead low to the ♠Q (forcing two tricks whenever East has the ♠K) and then, if unsuccessful, playing low to the ♠10 (making two tricks whenever West has the ♠J).

"Excellent chance" is not the same as "certainty" though, and we'd be certain to make two tricks if either opponent led a Spade. Once again, welcome to the world of the **frozen suit**.

Can we force a Spade lead out of East-West? Yes we can! We take the ♦A and draw trumps in three rounds. Now we play three rounds of Clubs, which sets up a Club winner as well as putting the opponents on lead. East-West have a Diamond to cash and they can suit themselves which defender takes it.

Here, it's East with the ♦K, but having taken it he is stymied. A Spade lead **guarantees** us a second Spade winner when we play low from hand. It doesn't matter who has what in Spades, we are assured of two tricks in the suit when the opponents open it up.


Yes, we were fortunate in that both trumps and Clubs broke 3-2. Still, when lady luck rides past – invite her in!



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VB#24 (Strip and) End-plays Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 45
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: West	Board #: 4
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: All

	North		
	♠ AJT65		
	♥ J74		
	♦ A72		
	♣ 76		
West		East	
♠ 2		♠ 83	
♥ A82		♥ QT9	
♦ QJT83		♦ 9654	
♣ J842		♣ KQ93	
	South		
	♠ KQ974		
	♥ K653		
	♦ K		
	♣ AT5		

This hand is similar to Hand 3 in that you have a suit that is best opened up by the opponents. It's another example of a **frozen suit**.

How might we get East-West to work for our side?

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1♠
P	3♠	P	4♠
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

With 25 points between us and a 5-5 Spade fit we arrive in 4♠ after an invitational sequence. West leads the ♦Q. The sight of dummy's ♦A is a relief, because it means that the singleton ♦K in hand is not waste paper.

Our **Count** and **Plan** shows us that we have some problems in this hand. Take a look at the Heart suit. If we were to lead the suit from either our hand or dummy we would lose three tricks. It's another classic **frozen suit**.

As usual with such layouts if we make the opposition lead Hearts we can guarantee one trick – which, in this case, is all we need. Then we can keep our losers to one Club and two Hearts.

Now, you may say that we don't know how Hearts are distributed. True – we don't know anything about the lie of the cards when dummy goes down but with this combination it is **always** best to make the opponents lead the suit rather than tackle it ourselves. If the defenders lead it we are 100% guaranteed a trick in Hearts, no matter who has what.

So, best play is to to set up a *Strip and End Play*. We need a symmetrical suit for our **Stick 'em On Lead** trick, and Clubs will do nicely for that task. By discarding a Club from the closed hand on dummy's Diamond winner we have two Clubs in each hand and the groundwork for the throw-in is complete. Note that a Heart discard from the closed hand on the ♦A is useless.

At trick one, we take the ♦K, and pull two rounds of trumps, ending on table. We then play our ♦A, *discarding a low Club*. Next, we ruff the remaining Diamond in our hand to strip out that suit. Finally, we cash the ♣A and **Stick 'em On Lead** with our last Club.

East takes the trick and looks at the dummy. If he leads a Heart he will be giving up a trick (we have to have a Heart honour for the bidding and play to make any sort of sense. After all, West would have led a Heart from the ♥AK).

Hoping that we are going to make an error East gives us a *ruff-and-discard* by leading a Club into our double-void. Now, we just have to be

careful to ruff this in the right hand – which is in the closed hand and not in dummy

[An important point, this: it doesn't work if we chuck a Heart from hand and ruff on table. We'd have three Hearts in each hand and would still have to broach the suit].


By chucking a Heart from dummy we can only possibly lose two Hearts and a Club, so 4♣ is secure. In the quest for an overtrick we cross to dummy with a trump and lead up to the ♥K. If East had the ♥A we'd make eleven tricks but, as it is, we should be well content with ten.



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VB#24 (Strip and) End-plays Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4H
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 5
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: N / S

	North	
	♠ A9	
	♥ QJ97	
	♦ 8642	
	♣ KT4	
West		East
♠ KT8642		♠ Q73
♥		♥ 542
♦ AK3		♦ QT97
♣ J862		♣ Q75
	South	
	♠ J5	
	♥ AKT863	
	♦ J5	
	♣ A93	

A deal with four obvious losers.

How can we make one disappear? A magic trick? No, it's just by making East-West open up another frozen suit.

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

Lead: ♦ A

You reach 4♥ after opening 1♥ and deciding to advance to game over partner's invitation. This is a marginal call with a 13-point hand, a 2·6·2·3 pattern and some wasted values (those Jacks look really worthless to us).

A count of losers shows that we have too many (one Spade, two Diamonds and a Club). A count of winners brings little cheer as we don't have enough (one Spade, six Hearts and two Clubs). Nine winners, four losers. At least the arithmetic balances.

So what should we do? Cash nine tricks and give up? No, of course not and you should focus here on Clubs. Why? Because this is another classic **frozen suit**. We have two tricks in it by right but see what happens if either opponent were to lead the suit. His partner would have to play his honour and that would create a finesse position, allowing us to take three tricks.

So, to make 4♥ we have to eliminate the other suits and force an opponent on lead. We are aided in this process by West who starts off with three rounds of Diamonds. You can't blame him for this defence but a Spade switch at trick two would have been a killer. Can you see why?

Anyway, we ruff the third Diamond, draw trumps ending on table and ruff the last Diamond. Ruffing *in the long hand* gains us no tricks *per se* but it does eliminate the suit from dummy as well as the closed hand. Now we play off the ♠A and another Spade and **stick 'em on lead**.


What can the defence do (except weep)? A further Spade lead would be a *ruff-and-discard*, allowing you to throw off a Club while ruffing in the other hand. As it is, East chooses to win the Spade and lead a Club. Well, you just need **split honours** now. You play low from hand, West inserts the ♠J so you win the ♠K on table. Now you can play a Club and finesse the ♣9. When that wins you are home and dry. Opening up Clubs is fatal for East and West but your play gives them little choice.



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VB#24 (Strip and) End-plays Part 1 ACOL	Contract: 4S
Date: 07/10/2015	By: South
Dealer: East	Board #: 6
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: E / W

	North	
	♠ K982	
	♥ K42	
	♦ J63	
	♣ 642	
West		East
♠ 6		♠ T53
♥ JT3		♥ Q975
♦ KQ4		♦ 9875
♣ KQJ875		♣ T9
	South	
	♠ AQJ74	
	♥ A86	
	♦ AT2	
	♣ A3	

Another deal with apparently too many losers.

Still, if we can force someone on lead at the key moment we might wring an extra trick out of them.

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

Lead: ♣ K

Here you reach 4♠ as South after West has overcalled 2♣, vulnerable. To no one's surprise, West leads the ♣K against your game. How should you plan to make it?

Well, a count of winners and losers shows nine winners (five Spades, two Hearts, one Diamond and one Club). Meanwhile, by way of confirmation, you can see four losers (one Heart, two Diamonds and a Club).

How can you eradicate a loser? There is nothing to **trump** (not in the *short trump hand*, anyway) and no side-suit on which you can **dump** anything. The only possibility is in Diamonds – were West to lead the suit he'd be sure to give us two tricks in it. If East were to lead it we'd probably still be all right as this may set up a finesse position.

Yep, you've guessed it. The Diamonds are **frozen**. Now, we still have to get the timing right. We need to eliminate Clubs and Hearts and stick the opposition into play at a time that's right for us. To do this we have to duck trick one. (If we don't do this East may gain the lead at the wrong time for us and play a Diamond).

West persists with Clubs and we take the ♣A. Drawing trumps comes next, and that takes three rounds. Next comes the crucial play of ruffing a Club in hand (stripping the suit from the dummy) and the hard work is done. It's time to make the opponents do the running so we play off the ♥A, ♥K and *exit* with a Heart.

If West were to take that it would be game over but as it happens East takes the third Heart. He plays a Diamond through the Ace (this does his side no damage) and we calmly and patiently play low. West wins the ♦Q and is well and truly in it. Deep in it – up to his neck.

He has the unenviable choice of leading a Diamond away from the ♦K or of conceding a ruff-and-discard. The poison or the dagger? West chooses a Club lead and that's the end of the party. Away goes a Diamond loser while you ruff in the other hand.

Game, set and match.