



Practise ruffing losers in dummy (NOT drawing trumps).
Emphasis on ruffing in short hand. Part 1 of 2. SA version.
Updated winter 2015/6

Y1 VBlue #10 Ruffing losers in dummy Part 1 SA	Contract: 4S
Date: 24/03/2016	By: South
Dealer: North	Board #: 1
Play this hand online!	Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠	AT87	♠	6432
♥	Q	♥	KJT2
♦	A853	♦	QJ4
♣	7543	♣	T2
West		South	
♠		♠	KQJ95
♥	96543	♥	A87
♦	T972	♦	K6
♣	AKQ8	♣	J96

This series is all about playing the cards in suit contracts. In previous deals we have emphasized the necessity of drawing trumps. Well, there are many hands where that would be unwise. In these deals you need to ruff your losers before you pull the opponents' trumps.

How can you tell what type of hand it is? How can you tell as declarer whether you should draw trumps or not? Well, it's all down to counting. Much successful bridge play relies on counting skills. When dummy appears you must carefully count your winners. If you can see sufficient for your contract then – in general – you should draw trumps. If you can't see enough tricks then you should look to ruff some of your losers.

One crucial point of technique is not always understood. It is only worthwhile ruffing losers if you ruff in the short trump hand. If you have five trumps and dummy has three then ruffing in the hand with five trumps is unlikely to achieve anything at all. However, ruffing in the hand with three trumps will allow you extra tricks.

Hopefully, some of these deals will clarify this important point.

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

Lead: ♣ A

Bidding.

We reach 4♠ as South after the auction 1♠ – 3♠ – 4♠. Partner's *invitational raise* to the three-level of our 1♠ opening bid is normal enough. He has 10 points (even though the ♥Q is singleton) and four trumps, and we have just about sufficient to advance to game.

Play.

West has an easy opening lead of the ♣A and we contemplate the dummy. Having thanked partner for his contributions we must stop to **Count** and make a **Plan**.

Although the opponents are in charge of the field with their Clubs we should still think our way through the hand before we call for a card from dummy.

Here, we can see five Spades, one Heart and two Diamonds for a total of eight tricks so need to find two more from somewhere. When we have a shortfall of tricks it is usually unwise to draw trumps – certainly not until we have seen where we can make the “extras”.

An important technique that may help us out in this type of hand is to consider (and count) *losers*. To do this we need to focus on the South hand alone (declarer's hand) and look through suit by suit. Then see if those losers can be eliminated by ruffing.

We can see no losers in Spades. In Hearts we have two losers but – thanks to the singleton in dummy – we can ruff the ♥8 7 on table. Our “losing” ♦6 is covered by dummy's ♦A (so no losers in that suit) and we have three trashy Clubs – all losers. So we have three losers in total – all in Clubs.

We might, therefore, count eight winners and three losers – a baffling total since that doesn't add up to thirteen. However, by ruffing two Hearts on table we actually make **seven** trump tricks (five trumps in hand and two ruffs in dummy). Added to the ♦A K and the ♥A that makes ten winners.

Hand 1 is a relatively simple affair.

Note that ruffing Diamonds in hand is not right. This is like taking a spoonful of sugar: it might make you feel good in the short term but it is harmful in the long term.

The aim on this deal is to ruff losers in dummy – in the *short trump hand*. We have already counted five trump tricks – we won't make more by using them for ruffing purposes.

Let's dot the *is* and cross the *ts*.

West cashes the ♣A K Q and – with nothing better to do – continues with the master ♣8. We ruff this and note that a sneaky East is pitching his Diamonds. It would be dangerous to try to cash the ♦A K before drawing trumps as East might get a Diamond ruff.

We immediately set about getting Heart ruffs. To that end we play off the ♥A and ruff a Heart. We need to return to hand so we play a Spade from the table and win with the ♠9 in hand, noting the 4-0 break.

A further Heart ruff is taken, this time with the ♠A. There are two reasons for this (three if we count being flashy!) One is that all the Spades are *equals* so it doesn't matter which Spade we play. The second is that we need to return to hand to pull trumps. We can lead the last Spade and overtake it – but not if that last Spade is the Ace!

When in hand we extract all of East's trumps and now – finally – we cash the ♦A K.



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Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: East

[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 4H

By: South

Board #: 2

Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ 8		♠ KQ96	
♥ KJT		♥ 73	
♦ J7643		♦ 982	
♣ J753		♣ QT96	
West		South	
♠ T753		♠ AJ42	
♥ 542		♥ AQ986	
♦ AKQT		♦ 5	
♣ 84		♣ AK2	



Here you find yourself in an easy game contract.

Well, it's easy enough if you resist the siren call...

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

Lead: ♦ A

Bidding.

We open 1♥ as South and partner raises to 2♥. With a powerful hand (18 points) and an attractive 5·4·3·1 shape we advance immediately to game.

Play.

Dummy has exactly what partner said: 6 points and trump support. You can't argue with that!

West starts off with the ♦A and contemplates dummy. Many players would attempt to cash the ♦K now but this West is a canny old bird and has seen this type of dummy before. Knowing that dummy is likely to be used for ruffing Spades he astutely shifts to a trump. This is the counterplay used by defenders to the ruff-in-the-dummy declarer play. Anyway, this defense may be effective in saving a trick but it doesn't beat the contract.

Counting our tricks we see one Spade, five Hearts and two Clubs for a total of eight. That shortfall means that it would be quite wrong to draw trumps. The extra tricks are about to come from ruffing losers in dummy (in the **short trump hand**).

Our losers (looking at the South hand) are three Spades, two of which can be trumped in dummy, no Hearts, one Diamond and one Club. Just the three.

So... we win the ♥10 at trick two, play the ♠A, ruff a Spade, come to hand with a Club and ruff another Spade. Having disposed of two Spade losers (and having run out of trumps on table) it is time to draw trumps. We come to hand with another Club and play off the Hearts.

In the end we have to concede a Spade and a Club but we still have ten winners.



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Y1 VBlue #10 Ruffing losers in dummy Part 1 SA

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: South


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Contract: 2H

By: South

Board #: 3

Vulnerable: None

		North		
		♠ A4		
		♥ 953		
		♦ QJ53		
		♣ AKJ4		
West				East
♠ QJT92				♠ 863
♥ AQJ				♥ K
♦ 976				♦ AKT4
♣ 93				♣ QT852
		South		
		♠ K75		
		♥ T87642		
		♦ 82		
		♣ 76		

Sometimes you find yourself unexpectedly thrown into the limelight when you pick up trash.

Such as this deal...

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

Lead: ♠ Q

Bidding.

We Pass as dealer with a heap of tat and watch as partner opens 1NT. Terrific (!) – just what we wanted to hear. Well, we have hammered this theme in previous series – we don't Pass out of fright, desperation or irritation just because we haven't got anything. Our duty is to rescue partner from this terrible contract and see if we can improve matters.

A bid of 2♥ is a *weakness take-out* and commands partner to Pass (if he wants to remain our partner he should heed the warning). No one has anything else to say and so we win the auction.

Play.

West has a ready-made lead in the ♠Q. Now, dummy isn't bad for playing in Hearts – it does have three trumps for us after all. So we do have nine Hearts between us, even though we are missing the ♥A K Q J. Anyway, best to start by **counting** winners and losers.

Winners? Two Spades, a number of Hearts (which may be as many as **four** if the suit obliges by breaking 2-2), and two Clubs. So eight tricks may be there.

Losers? Well, there are no Spade losers if we ruff our baby Spade on table, two or three Heart losers, two Diamond losers and no Club losers. Four or five losers, depending on the trump split.

So... on the ♠Q lead we take the ♠A (this is another application of *playing high from shortage*), cash the ♠K and ruff a Spade. Now – despite the terrible quality – we can attempt to draw trumps.

We lead a trump and West decides to cash three rounds. We'd have preferred that the suit split 2-2 but that just isn't how the cards lie. However, we still make two Clubs, two Spades, and **four** trump tricks (three in hand and one ruff on table – in the *short trump hand*).

Note that ruffing Clubs in hand is a waste of time – it wouldn't generate anything extra.



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Y1 VBlue #10 Ruffing losers in dummy Part 1 SA

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: West

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Contract: 4H

By: South

Board #: 4

Vulnerable: None

		North	
		♠ QJ765	
		♥ 984	
		♦ K873	
		♣ A	
West			East
♠ 9432			♠ KT8
♥ J			♥ T75
♦ QJT			♦ A95
♣ KT863			♣ QJ94
		South	
		♠ A	
		♥ AKQ632	
		♦ 642	
		♣ 752	

Here you have to evaluate your hand accurately and look beyond the point count to make sure you are neither too cautious nor too optimistic

The key point in the play is the decision whether to draw trumps or not.

One choice brings success, the other would bring

West	North	East	South
P	P	P	1♥
P	1♠	P	2♥
P	3♥	P	4♥
P	P	P	

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

We open 1♥ with a six-card suit and 13 points. When partner responds 1♠ we rebid 2♥ which partner raises to an invitational 3♥. Our hand is worth more than its 13 points so we bid 4♥.

Play.

We get the lead of the ♦Q from West, which we can identify as being the top-of-a-sequence. Dummy is about par for the course – three trumps and 10 points. The attractive 5-4-3-1 shape causes North to upgrade his hand a little – he can see the usefulness of the singleton Club.

Anyway, we can **count** eight top tricks (the ♠A, six Hearts and the ♣A) but that is it. With insufficient available tricks it would be unwise to attempt to draw trumps. We can make use of partner's precious singleton Club by ruffing two losing Clubs in dummy which is all we need to make our contract.

If we check on losers we have no Spade losers, no Heart losers (unless the furies are unkind and trumps split 4-0) some Diamond losers (two? Three?) and two Club losers. However, two of our Clubs can be trumped in dummy. Ten tricks are made via *eight* trump tricks and two black Aces.

The play in detail: We play low to the first trick and second tricks, fully expecting East to be forced to play the ♦A *on air*, having started with ♦A ×. Not this time, however, and the defense proceed to cash three Diamonds, leaving the thirteenth Diamond in dummy as a winner. Can we make use of it?

That is an intriguing question. If we draw trumps we could but that's not enough tricks (six Hearts, the ♣A and the last Diamond). True, Hearts might break 2-2 and we could ruff a Club as well but that would be pushing our luck.

So we revert to Plan A. We win the trump shift at trick four and plan to ruff two Clubs in dummy (and ignore the siren call of the last Diamond). This line is by far the best shot. We win the ♥A,

play the ♣A, come to hand with the ♣A, ruff a Club, ruff a Spade, ruff a Club, ruff a Spade and play off the top trumps.

It is important to understand that the Club ruffs in the *short hand* (dummy) gained us vital extra tricks. The Spade ruffs in the *long hand* (the closed hand) gained nothing except entries.

Study this well – the principle is crucial!



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VB#10 Ruffing losers in Dummy 1 (SA)

Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: North


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Contract: 4S

By: South

Board #: 5

Vulnerable: None

North			
♠ J732			
♥ J853			
♦ AK75			
♣ 9			
West		East	
♠ 9		♠ KQT	
♥ 92		♥ QT64	
♦ QJT942		♦ 63	
♣ K876		♣ QT42	
South			
♠ A8654			
♥ AK7			
♦ 8			
♣ AJ53			

This deal shows some slightly pushy bidding (at least by partner!) and needs careful play.

Although best play lands you an overtrick, careless play would see you going one down.

Which line will you opt for?

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

Lead: ♦ Q

Bidding.

We arrive in 4♠ after North raises our 1♠ opening bid to 3♠ and we give it the fourth Spade.

Play.

West leads the ♦Q and we should take stock. This is not a "draw trumps" deal. Why not? Well, we must **count our tricks**. Three Spades (maybe four on a good day), two Hearts, two Diamonds and the ♠A. Even with a 2-2 trump break that only totals nine winners.

We have three little Clubs in our hand and a singleton in dummy so we should aim to ruff all our losing Clubs with three of dummy's trumps. If we play two rounds of trumps then dummy wouldn't have enough trumps to ruff our Clubs.

So the play should go... Win the ♦K in dummy, cash the ♠A (we can afford to play one round of trumps), play the ♣A, ruff a Club, chuck the losing ♥7 on the ♦A, cross to the ♥K, ruff a Club, cross to the ♥A, ruff a Club. This all passes off peacefully (nobody is able to over-ruff) so we end up conceding two trump tricks and making an overtrick.

Too easy? Maybe. But if we had played off two rounds of trumps early we would have been defeated. This play would have cost us **two tricks**. Why? Because East – on our right – would have been able (and very willing) to play a third round of trumps. Now we'd have just one trump in the dummy to take care of three losing Clubs. As you may remember from early schooling, three into one doesn't go...

Success on this hand comes from realizing exactly how many rounds of trumps we can afford to draw and then making sure we can ruff all our losers in the dummy (the *short trump hand*, note).



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Date: 24/03/2016

Dealer: East

[Play this hand online!](#)

Contract: 4H

By: South

Board #: 6

Vulnerable: None

North		East	
♠ T		♠ K8732	
♥ Q72		♥ 5	
♦ A753		♦ KQ2	
♣ 96542		♣ JT83	
West		South	
♠ AJ54		♠ Q96	
♥ 964		♥ AKJT83	
♦ T986		♦ J4	
♣ Q7		♣ AK	

Here you reach game easily enough.

Can you match your play to the good bidding?

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

Lead: ♦ T

Bidding.

We open 1♥ and partner raises to 2♥. It is certainly worth a shot at game now with 18 points and a six-card suit so we have a bash at 4♥.

Play.

West kicks off with the ♦10 lead and we **count** our *winners* and *losers*. Here we can see that we have three Spade losers (we are looking at the South hand only, remember) unless some of them can be trumped. We have no trump losers, one Diamond loser and no Club loser.

What about winners? Well, there are six Hearts, one Diamond and two Clubs. With nine winners only it would be an unwise play to draw trumps – best is to play for ruffs.

Note that trumping Clubs and Diamonds in the South hand is a waste of time – we won't increase the winner count that way. However, by trumping Spades on table we'd manage to make more than six Heart tricks.

To achieve ruffs in dummy (the **short trump hand**) we have to prepare the groundwork, and that means giving up a Spade as early as possible to create a void on table. Thus we win the ♦A and immediately lead a Spade, not caring which defender wins it.

West sees our plan and leads a trump (his best defense by a mile). However, we have the opponents over a barrel. We win the trump shift in hand, ruff a Spade, come to hand with a Club and ruff another Spade. With the Spade losers eliminated it's time to draw trumps. So we come to hand with another Club and cash the top Hearts.

True, there is a Diamond to concede at the end but all the Hearts are good so we record an overtrick.

Note that we make **eight** trump tricks and three outside winners (the ♦A and the ♣A K). The eight trump tricks are six Hearts in hand and two ruffs in dummy – in the *short trump hand*.

