



Bridge Cardplay: An Easy Guide

RUFFING LOSERS

David Bird & Marc Smith

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Contents

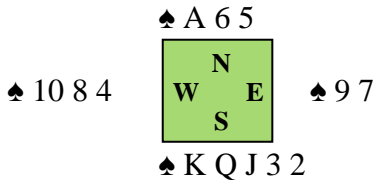
1. Ruffing in the short-trump hand.....	4
Quiz.....	9
2. Should I draw trumps before the ruff?.....	12
Quiz.....	17
3. Preparing for the ruff.....	20
Quiz.....	25
4. Should I ruff high or low?.....	28
Quiz.....	33
5. When is it wrong to ruff?.....	36
Quiz.....	41
6. Planning the necessary ruffs.....	44
Quiz.....	49

1.

Ruffing in the short-trump hand

There are many great pleasures that you can experience as declarer. One of them is ruffing a losing side-suit card to give you an extra trick. ('Ruffing' means the same as 'trumping'. It is the preferred term in most bridge writing.)

An important early lesson is that ruffing will give you an extra trick only when you ruff in the short-trump hand. Suppose you are playing in a spade contract, with the trump suit shown below. (As is the case throughout this book, and in nearly all bridge books, declarer will be sitting South. The dummy is North, with the defenders East and West).



If you simply play five rounds of the suit, you will score five trump tricks. Suppose instead that you ruff a side-suit card with dummy's ♠5 and only then play five rounds of trumps. You will score six trump tricks. Ruffing in the hand with the shorter trumps gives you an extra trick.

What would happen if you followed a different path, taking a ruff with the ♠2 in the South hand? When you subsequently played the trump suit, there would be only four tricks left. You would score a total of just five trump tricks – the same number that you had at the start.

It is an important lesson to remember. Ruffing in the long-trump hand does not give you an extra trick.

Let's look at a full deal:

		♠ Q 7 2											
		♥ K 4 2											
		♦ A 9 7 6 3											
		♣ A 5											
♠ 3		<table style="border-collapse: collapse; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S			♠ 9 8 6
	N												
W		E											
	S												
♥ Q J 10 7				♥ A 9 3									
♦ Q 10 8 2				♦ K J 4									
♣ J 9 6 2				♣ Q 8 4 3									
		♠ A K J 10 5 4											
		♥ 8 6 5											
		♦ 5											
		♣ K 10 7											

West	North	East	South
	1♦	pass	1♠
pass	2♠	pass	4♠
all pass			

West leads the ♥Q. Since there is no chance that West holds the ♥A, you play low from dummy. He continues with the ♥J and you again play low from dummy, just in case East began with a doubleton ♥A. The defenders score a third heart trick and East then switches to the ♠9. How will you continue the play?

If you draw three rounds of trumps, you will score six trump tricks, the ♦A and the ♣AK. That will be a total of only nine – one down. Instead, you should secure a tenth trick by ruffing a club in the short-trump hand.

You win the trump switch with the ace and draw a second round of trumps with the king, West showing out. Then you cross to the ♣A and return to the ♣K. The time has come to take your ruff. You lead the ♣10 and ruff with dummy's ♠Q. After playing the ♦A, you return to hand with a diamond ruff to draw the last trump. The game is yours.

As you see, you made seven trump tricks – six in the South hand and one extra by ruffing a club in the North (short-trump) hand. Ruffing a diamond in the South hand did not provide an extra trick. You used it merely to cross back to draw the last trump.

Quiz Hands

1.

♠ 7 4 2
♥ A 8 5 2
♦ 7 6
♣ A K 7 4

♥J led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ A K Q J 8
♥ K 4
♦ A Q 8
♣ Q 6 3

You arrive in 6♠ and West leads the ♥J. Looking at the losers in the long-trump (South) hand, you have only two – in diamonds. What is your plan to avoid at least one of these losers?

2.

♠ A J 9 4
♥ 8 5
♦ A J 2
♣ 10 8 6 3

♦5 led

	N	
W		E
	S	

♠ 5
♥ K Q 6 2
♦ K Q 10 9 7 6
♣ A K

You reach 6♦ and West leads a trump. What is your plan to make the slam?

Answer to Quiz Hand 1

	♠ 7 4 2										
	♥ A 8 5 2										
	♦ 7 6										
	♣ A K 7 4										
♠ 9 5	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 60px; height: 60px; margin: auto;"> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">N</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">W</td> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">E</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td style="text-align: center;">S</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ 10 6 3
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ J 10 9 6		♥ Q 7 3									
♦ K 9 4 3 2		♦ J 10 5									
♣ 10 5		♣ J 9 8 2									
	♠ A K Q J 8										
	♥ K 4										
	♦ A Q 8										
	♣ Q 6 3										

West	North	East	South
	1♣	pass	1♠
pass	2♠	pass	4NT
pass	5♥	pass	6♠
all pass			

You win the ♥J lead with dummy's ♥A and see two potential losers in diamonds.

At trick two, you finesse the ♦Q. This loses to West's king, but that's no problem; you can afford one diamond loser. You win the heart continuation with the ♥K and will subsequently ruff the ♦8 in dummy to make the slam. The ruff in the short-trump hand is your twelfth trick.

(Did you plan to draw two rounds of trumps before taking the diamond ruff? It's a good idea. We will look into such matters in the next chapter.)

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In this series, two of the game's top writers explain clearly the various cardplay skills that you will need. Every booklet contains six chapters – each ending with a short Quiz.

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- Ruffing in the short-trump hand
- Should I draw trumps before the ruff?
- Preparing for the ruff
- Should I ruff high or low?
- When is it wrong to ruff?
- Planning the necessary ruffs



DAVID BIRD (Southampton, UK) is the world's most prolific bridge writer, with over 150 bridge books to his name. Known for the clarity of his writing and explanations, he has won the American Bridge Teachers' Association Book of the Year Award a record nine times. His celebrated humorous fiction series, featuring the cantankerous Abbot, has run for over 45 years.



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