

HAND OF THE MONTH FOR NEWER PLAYERS

June, 2015

From our earliest days at the bridge table we are taught that as declarer, we should draw the opponent's trumps early to prevent them from making tricks by ruffing. With most hands this is an excellent general rule, ***BUT*** like all general rules there are exceptions.

This month, we look at a third of the most common reasons for delaying the trump extraction process.

	NORTH	
	S Q7	
	H 7	
WEST	D 86532	EAST
S 843	C A7542	S 92
H Q1082		H KJ95
D K9		D AJ104
C KQJ10	SOUTH	C 986
	S AKJ1065	
Vul. none	H A643	
Dealer South	D Q7	
Opening lead Club K	C 3	

Bidding	West	North	East
South			
1 spade	pass	1 notrump (forcing)	pass
3 spades! (16-18)	pass	4 spades!!	all pass

South might have chosen to show his hearts rather than to make the jump rebid in spades; his decision was clearly influenced by the strength of the spade holding vs. the poor quality of the heart suit. In spite of holding only 6 HCP, North realized his spade queen and singleton heart both rated to be valuable holdings and so bid one more to put the partnership in to an aggressive game contract.

South followed the general rule for planning the play of the hand in a suit contract by counting losers; in addition to two diamond losers, he could see three possible heart losers unless dummy's trumps were used to ruff two of them.

Having this reasoned, the play proceeded club ace, heart to the ace in hand, heart ruff, club ruff in hand (the only way to return to hand without playing trump), another heart ruff in dummy, another club ruff in hand, and finally the play of the top spades, conceding a heart and two diamonds at the end. Game bid and made.

As a general rule, ruffing in the hand with the long trumps does not gain tricks; in this case however, club ruffs in hand were the only way to return to hand without touching trumps.

By not drawing trumps, declarer ran the risk that an opponent might win a trick by ruffing; this was a necessary risk to take under the circumstances.

Notice that had West's opening lead been a trump, the contract would have failed as only one heart could then be ruffed in dummy. Had South bid hearts along the way, with his strong holding in that suit West might have been more likely to lead a trump realizing declaring might need to cross ruff. On the actual auction, it was less clear that a trump lead was needed.

Opening trump leads are indicated anytime the auction suggests that declarer will need to cross ruff.

MORAL: Delay drawing trumps when dummy's trumps are needed to ruff losers.