

Short-Hand Ruffs

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<http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/aaDeclarerPlay/ShortHandRuffs.pdf>

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For more see *Playing the Dummy* at <http://watsongallery.ca/bridge/book-playingthedummy.htm>

The one fundamental earmark of respectable declarer play is that the person has come to grasp that short-hand ruffs gain a trick and long-trump-hand ruffs do not. Not only do long-trump ruffs do not gain a trick, they actually jeopardize the contract if there is a bad trump split.

The long hand is the hand containing the long trump and the short hand is the hand containing the short trump.

I will tell declarers to avoid ruffing in the long trump hand. It is something the defenders want declarer to do, and it is called a forcing defense. Defenders will try to tap the declarer, and the declarer should avoid tapping himself. He may lose control of the hand which is the purpose of having a trump suit in the first place.

Consider the trump suit:

♠AKQJ10

♠987

If one cashes five rounds of trump, one gets five tricks. The cards that are discarded on the Jack and Ten could have been long-hand ruffs and do not gain a trick.

If one ruffs with the ♠10 and then draws trump, one still gets five tricks but loses an additional trick to a small trump if trump split 5-0.

If one ruffs with the ♠10 and the ♠Jack and then draws trump, one still gets five tricks but loses an additional trick to a small trump if trump split 4-1.

However, if one ruffs with the ♠7 and then draws trump, one gets six tricks.

If one ruffs with the ♠7 and the ♠8 and then draws trump, one gets seven tricks.

Long-Hand Ruffs

The following are situations where it is correct to ruff in the long hand:

1. Huge trump fit
2. Transportation is needed
3. Cross Ruff
4. Dummy Reversal
5. Trump Coup
6. Trump end play
7. Squeeze
8. Trump Squeeze
9. Moysian fit

1. **Huge** trump fit

When one has a ton of trump and even with a bad split, you will always have more trump than any defender.

2. **Transportation** is needed

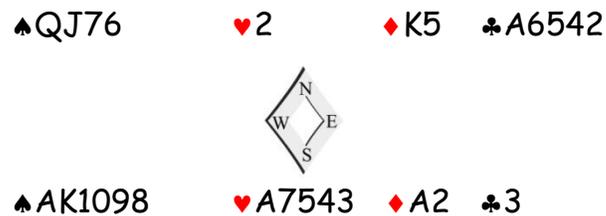
- It is better style to plan ahead and use entries wisely than it is to shorten your long trump holding.
- When one is desperate for transportation, do it and ignore your partner rolling his eyes.
- The problem with using a long hand ruff as transportation, is that the opponents are told which suit to attack and force more long hand ruffs. This is especially bad if one cashes a stopper in order to take a long-hand ruff.

3. Crossruff

The keys to a crossruff are the following:

- Opponents cannot over-ruff.
- Cash your side-suit winners first.
 - Opponents will have their trump at the end and would have discarded all their side suits.

Example



- ♦Queen was led against 6♠ by South
- Do not draw a single trump.
- Cash Ace and King of diamonds, the side-suit winners.
- Cross ruff hearts and clubs.
- South will win ♦Ace and ♦King, ♥Ace, ♣Ace, 4 heart ruffs, 4 club ruffs and the 9♠ to make 6♠+1 for 1010.
- On a trump lead, South will win A♠, AK♦, A♥, A♣, 3 heart ruffs, and 4 club ruffs to make 6♠= for 980.

4. Dummy Reversal

The conditions key to a dummy reversal are the following:

- You have the high trump in dummy
- You have a singleton in declarer's hand
- You have a loser in declarer's hand to get rid of.
- The trump split.
- You have enough dummy entries (three or more)

Example

♠ J109 ♥ A654 ♦ A5 ♣ QJ105



♠ AKQ87 ♥ 7 ♦ 64 ♣ AK987

♦ Queen was led against 6♠.

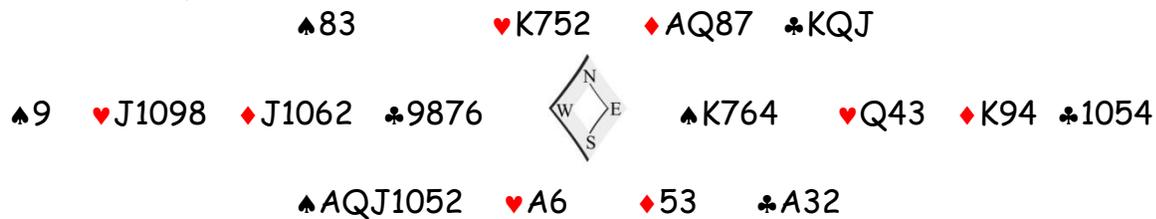
- Win ♦ Ace.
- Too Dangerous to use clubs for entries twice.
- Ruff a heart with ♠ Ace
- Play ♠ 7 to ♠ Jack
- Ruff a heart with ♠ King
- Play ♠ 8 to ♠ 10
- Ruff a heart with ♠ Queen
- Play a small club to the ♣ Queen
- Draw last trump with ♠ 9, discarding a diamond from the hand.
- Claim as hand contains just good clubs making 6♠+1 for 1460.
- If trump are not 3-2, this will not work and you go down in a cold 6♠ trying for 7♠.
- If you have enough side suit entries to dummy, you must test trump for two rounds. If trump are 4-1, do not reverse the dummy.
- Here, there was not enough side entries so trump was needed for transportation.

5. Trump Coup

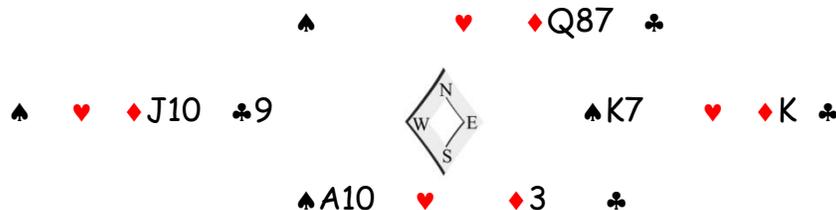
The conditions key to a trump coup are the following:

- Trump split badly so you need another trump finesse but do not have either any more trump in dummy.
- You can shorten your trump to the same length as the opponent.

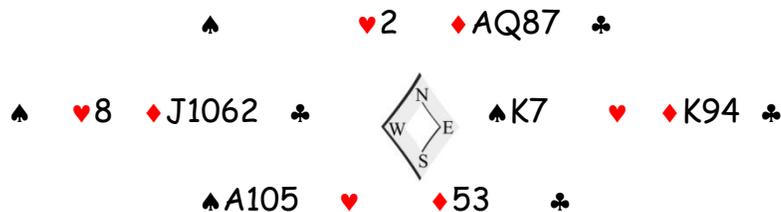
Example:



The ♥Jack was led against 6♠. You win the ♥King and take a trump finesse which holds. You go back to dummy on the ♣King and take the finesse again and West shows out. You cash the ♥Ace and ♣Ace and go to dummy on the ♣Jack. It holds and you breathe a sigh of relief. You ruff a heart. You play to the ♦Ace and ruff the last heart. East discards a diamond. If he ruffs, you over-ruff and draw trump. He does not and the hands look like this:



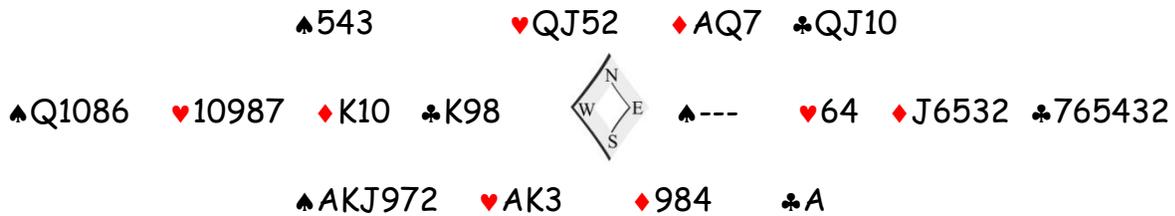
Now exit the ♦3. Whether East or West wins, the opponents give you one more trump finesse. You make 6♠. If you take the diamond finesse, it loses and East exits a diamond. The hands look like this:



The trump coup does not work.

6. Trump End Play

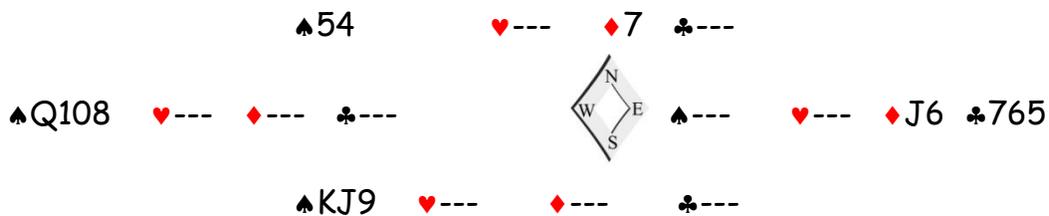
Example:



West leads the ♥10 against 6♠. South wins the ♥10 opening lead with the ♥Ace and cashes the ♠Ace to get the bad news.

South now must shorten his trump to the same length as West's trump. He cashes the ♣Ace and plays a ♦9 to the ♦Queen which holds. He ruffs a ♣, plays the ♥King and the ♥2 to the ♥Queen and ruffs another ♣. He plays a ♦ to the ♦Ace and cashes the last ♥ pitching the ♦8.

The hands now look like the following:



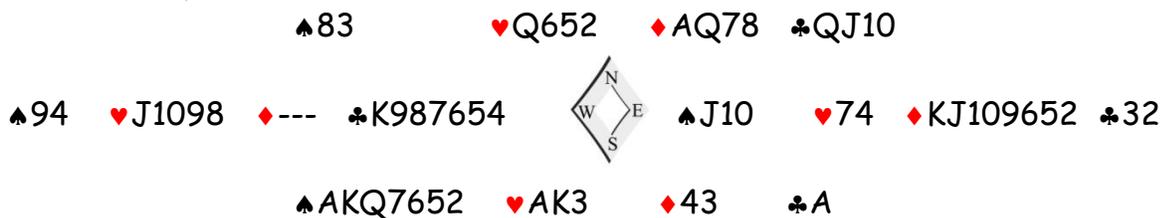
South can either ruff the ♦7 with the ♠9 or play the ♠4 to the ♠9. Now West is endplayed. He wins the ♠10 and has no exit cards other than the ♠8.

7. Squeeze

The conditions key to a squeeze are the following:

- You are one trick short of your contract.
- The count is rectified
 - Lose every single loser except one.
 - The last loser will disappear with the squeeze.
- An opponent is guarding two key suits.
- Trump are drawn.
- Cash all trump and make an opponent who is guarding two suits, relinquish a winner in one of the suits.

Example:

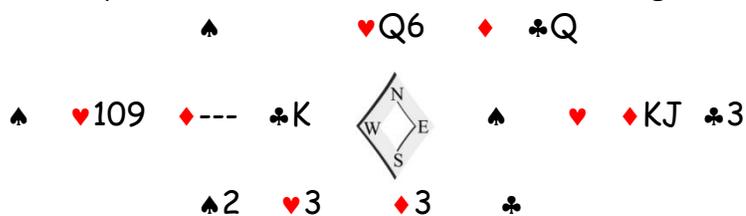


The ♥Jack was led against 7NT. You never lead a suit with nontouching middle honours, kings or queens.

Declarer wins the ace of hearts and counts 12 tricks. He needs the diamond finesse or hearts to break 3-3 (unlikely with the lead) or West to have four hearts and the King of clubs. It would be nice to test hearts before the diamond finesse but the queen of hearts is needed as an entry to the queen of clubs.

Declarer cashes the ♣Ace, ♥Ace and ♥King and plays a small diamond to the Ace seeing the bad split in diamonds, he runs his spades.

On the last spade, the hands look like the following:



West must discard before dummy. If West discards a heart, the queen of clubs is discarded and if West discards the ♣King, a small heart is discarded from dummy.

8. Trump Squeeze

A Spade contract

♦Q10 ♣AK3
♦KJ ♣Q76
♠98 ♦--- ♣J52

Run your trump and on the ♠9 pitch the ♣3. If East pitches ♦Jack, go to ♣Ace and ruff ♦Ten and the ♦Queen is good with the ♣King as an entry. If East pitches the ♣6, cash top two clubs and ruff a ♦ to cash the ♣Jack when the ♣Queen falls under the ♣King.

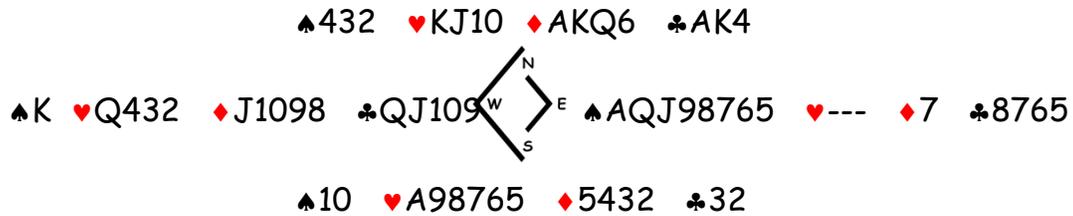
9. Moysian fit

where they force the long trump hand and you can only make on a cross-ruff.

10. Smother play

BM2000-5A-9

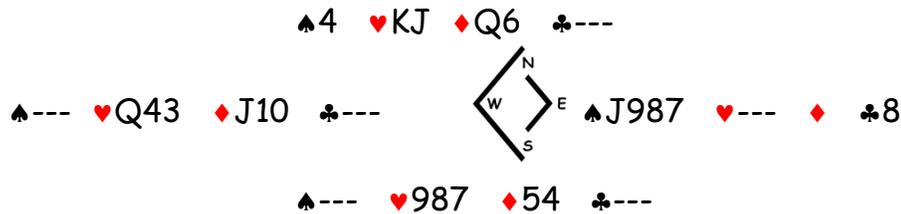
East Dealer East West Vulnerable



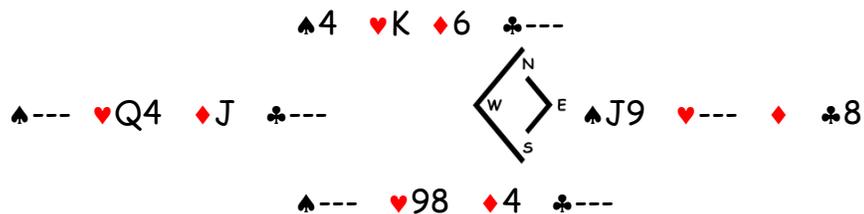
E	S	W	N
4♠	P	P	Dbl
P	5♥	All Pass	

♠King was led against 5♥. East wins the ♠Ace and plays ♠Queen. Ruff with the Ace and play a ♥ to the ♥ten. Cash top two diamonds showing a third loser. Cash top two clubs and ruff a club shortening the long trump hand to the same length as the defender.

The hands look like this.



Take another ♥ finesse, cash top diamond and the lead is in North with the hands as below:



Throw the losing ♦4 on the ♠4. East wins and has to give a sluff and a ruff. The ♥King is played if West overruffs. 5♥ makes.

- **Short-Hand Ruffs**

- Always take as many short-hand ruffs as you can.
 - Do not touch trump unless one has lots of trump and can draw trump and still have enough trump in the short hand for ruffs.
 - Defense will lead trump either on opening lead or when they gain the lead.
- Do not take short-hand ruffs and do not take finesses when you have a long side suit to make discards.

- **Mexico is a Destination not 3NT**

With a five-three major fit, 3NT is better than 4M if all suits are doubly stopped and either of the following is true:

- the hand with the three trump has no shortness.
- the hand with the three trump has a shortness in partner's second suit.
- both hands have the identical shortness, protected doubletons.

With a four-four major fit, either hand can be made to draw trump and either hand can be made to ruff. Therefore, 3NT scores better only if both hands and no ruffing value.

With a four-four major fit, one can see that it is much more difficult to determine whether 3NT makes more than 4M. For that reason, most players will not try 3NT with a four-four or five-four major fit unless they have oodles of points.

Sounds logical, right?

With oodles of points, play 3NT.

3NT does have a chance to score more when one or both hands have extra values. With extra values, the risk of opponents running a long suit is much less and the need for ruffing a loser is much less. No sense ruffing a winner.

With a four-four major fit, one likely needs 33 points to make 6 and with a five-three fit, one likely needs a little less than 33 to make 6. However,

if one is between a good 28 and 32 points, it is usually best to play Three Notrump if one settles for game not slam.

If one has all of the keycards, 6M may be better than 6NT because making an overtrick with a short hand ruff may be possible.

Four-Four Major fit

It is a very low percentage gamble to play 3NT with a four-four major fit. In this situation, one can ruff in one hand and draw trump with the other. Therefore if both hands are 4triple3, 3NT will score more if all of the suits are sufficiently stopped and the shortness is not mirrored.

Example 1. No shortness in both hands.

♠A1097 ♥A32 ♦K103 ♣K65



♠K862 ♥K54 ♦QJ54 ♣A73

Example 2. Shortness opposite values in both hands.

♠A1097 ♥32 ♦KJ103 ♣K65

♠QJ3 ♥A876 ♦Q987 ♣QJ

♠54 ♥Q54 ♦A65 ♣109842

♠K862 ♥KJ109 ♦42 ♣A73

Example 3. Shortness (doubletons) is the same in both hands.

♠A1097 ♥A2 ♦K1032 ♣K65



♠K862 ♥K3 ♦QJ54 ♣A73

Example 4. Oodles of points.

♠A1097 ♥A2 ♦AK1032 ♣K5



♠K862 ♥K3 ♦QJ54 ♣A73

This has 31 points and makes 680 or 690 if vulnerable. 3NT is better than 4♠.

Note how the point requirement for a slam decreases with the following:

- a long suit
- a double *Golden fit*

In examples 1 through 4, 3NT is better than 4♠. In 1 through 3, one can get 420 in 4♠ or 430 in 3NT if not vulnerable.