

THE CROSS RUFF

Ruff or trump? Are the words synonymous? In some cases but not always. The word “ruff” is usually a verb. You can “give partner a ruff” but not “give a trump”. “Diamonds are trumps” but not “Diamonds are ruffs”. “Cross ruffing” and “cross trumping” would both be acceptable but “cross ruffing” is preferred terminology.

If we ask a new player how he plans to make a hand, the first answer we always get is “I’m going to cross-ruff.” There is something joyous about a cross-ruff that excites the average bridge player!! Contrary to popular opinion, however, the true cross-ruff occurs relatively seldom.

It is just a fact (memorize this fact!) that ruffing in your hand rarely gets you extra tricks. Ruffing in dummy always gets you extra tricks.

The following is a hand on which you must NOT cross-ruff.

In a true cross-ruff, you must not draw trumps. You need to have them in dummy and in your hand. Therefore, if you own a long good side-suit (**non-trumps**) (e.g. AKxx opposite QJxx) you must not use the cross-ruff technique.

Check out this hand where South is in 7 Spades! YIKES! Only 28 HCP exist in the two hands.

D				
1	N North	WES NOR EAS SOU		
	♠ KJ97	1♦ P	P	1♥
	♥ 6	P	1♠ P	4N
	♦ QJ75	P	5♥ P	7♠
	♣ A764	P	P	P
W West	E East			
♠ 653	♠ 42			
♥ 9875	♥ KQJ10			
♦ 43	♦ 1092			
♣ KQJ10	♣ 9832			
	S South			
	♠ AQ108			
	♥ A432			
	♦ AK86			
	♣ 5			
7♠ North				
NS: 0				
EW: 0				

5H by North is RKCB showing 2 key cards without the Queen of Spades.

If you do not play this, then North would respond 5D (old-fashioned Blackwood)

South’s bid of 7S is very aggressive but humour me as I want you to play this hand in 7S

North has 3 Club losers. If she cross-ruffs this hand, she will lose the ability to pull trumps and then she will be unable to “enjoy” playing the Diamond suit as opponents will then ruff the Diamonds. North must ruff all his Clubs in dummy, returning to his hand once with the Queen of Diamonds and once more by ruffing ONE HEART ONLY in the declarer’s hand...we will ruff the heart just for purposes of communication with South hand. He must be careful to ruff the 3rd. Club with dummy’s Ace of Spades so that he will have a smaller Spade to get to declarer’s hand and pull the trumps. After trump is all gone, declarer can now play Diamonds and claim: “The rest are mine.”

2 D

N North	♠ J764 ♥ Q1086 ♦ 109 ♣ KQ10
W West	♠ A852 ♥ KJ53 ♦ KJ72 ♣ J
S South	♠ KQ103 ♥ A42 ♦ 86 ♣ 9853
E East	♠ 9 ♥ 97 ♦ AQ543 ♣ A7642

5♦ East
NS: 0
EW: 0

WES	NOR	EAS	SOU
		1♦	P
1♥	P	2♣	P
2♠	P	3♣	P
4♦	P	5♦	P
P	P		

On this next hand, East West bid a lot and reached 5D. South is declarer.

East has 4 Club losers and 2 potential Heart losers.

4 losers too many. AND NO long strong other non-trump suit.

Hurrah! Enter the cross-ruff. You will really be ruffing Clubs in dummy, thereby gaining extra tricks but you will need a way to get back to declarer's hand. The only way will be by ruffing Spades from dummy in declarer's hand. Do not pull ANY trumps at all. You will need to ruff all 4 Clubs from South hand with dummy's trump.

This is a perfect, classic cross-ruff hand. These come up rarely.

3 D

N North	♠ QJ102 ♥ AK76 ♦ A753 ♣ 3
W West	♠ 9765 ♥ 32 ♦ QJ1064 ♣ K2
S South	♠ AK43 ♥ 1098 ♦ 2 ♣ AQ654
E East	♠ 8 ♥ QJ54 ♦ K98 ♣ J10987

6♠ South
NS: 0
EW: 0

WES	NOR	EAS	SOU
P	1♦	P	1♣
P	4N	P	5♦
P	6♠	P	P
P			

One more...with an important adjunct.

South is in 6S. He has 1 Heart loser and 4 Club losers. Those C's cannot win tricks without performing magic on them so call them losers.

Once again, the perfect cross ruff hand. You win the Diamond Ace and now what? If you embark on your cross-ruff now, then, while you are ruffing your losing Clubs in the dummy, West will pitch one or two Hearts. Now, when you have not pulled trumps and go to play the Ace and King of H, West will be able to ruff your Heart Ace and King.

MORAL OF STORY: When you are cross-ruffing and have top cards in a "side-suit" (Hearts, in this case), you must FIRST cash those side-suit winners BEFORE commencing the cross-ruff or they will be ruffed by your opponents later.

Here's a crazy hand for you. South gets to 7H by bidding like a maniac. He buys an amazing dummy. There are 7 HCP between the two hands. But happy day: pure magic exists.

Spades: --- void
 Hearts: J109853
 Diamonds --- void
 Clubs: 10865432

Spades: --- void
 Hearts: AQ7642
 Diamonds 10876542
 Clubs: --- void

West leads C Ace. South ruffs, can then draw the H King and cross ruff the entire hand. Eventually, one of South's D's will become high, without the need to ruff it.

Voids in all the right places are great weapons! Ruff away!!!

	WES	NOR	EAS	SOU
1♠	P	2♠	P	
6♣	P	P	P	

N North
♠ 432
♥ QJ10543
♦ J4
♣ J7

W West
♠ AKJ98
♥ A9876
♦ K65
♣

E East
♠ Q1076
♥ 2
♦ A32
♣ 65432

S South
♠ 5
♥ K
♦ Q10987
♣ AKQ1098

6♣ West
 NS: 0
 EW: 0

You are in 6S. West bid like a maniac. We do not recommend this but it happened and here you are in 6S so you have to make it. You have 4 heart losers and a diamond loser. You will have to trump four hearts in dummy in order to make this contract.

This is a classic cross-ruff hand. You cannot draw any trump at all or you will not have enough trump in dummy with which to trump all those (FOUR!!) heart losers. You will be able to get back to the west hand to keep leading hearts (& then ruff them in dummy) only by leading clubs from dummy. You will NOT be able to draw any trumps.

Look what happens to North when you keep leading clubs and ruffing them in declarer's hand. North will pitch a diamond or two. THEN when you eventually get around to leading your diamonds (having not been able to pull trump), West will trump a diamond. UGLY!

When doing the perfect cross-ruff, you must first CASH YOUR WINNERS in the side suit (the non-trump suit) before doing the cross-ruffing.

D

5

N North
 ♠ AK87
 ♥ AQJ64
 ♦ 6
 ♣ 953

W West
 ♠ 3
 ♥ 9875
 ♦ KJ93
 ♣ J1084

E East
 ♠ 9642
 ♥ 3
 ♦ 108742
 ♣ KQ2

S South
 ♠ QJ105
 ♥ K102
 ♦ AQ5
 ♣ A76

6♠ South
 NS: 0
 EW: 0

WES NOR EAS SOU
 1♥ P 1♠
 P 3♠ P 4N
 P 5♦ P 6♠
 P P P

Sometimes we have a choice between playing a suit contract in a 5-3 fit or selecting another suit as trumps in which we have a 4-4 fit. # 5 is a good example.

* 5 H would be the correct response to REGULAR Blackwood.

5D would be the correct response to KEY CARD BLACKWOOD SHOWING 3 or 0 key cards (playing 1430)

What should South bid next? He knows that NS has a 4-4 spade fit. His next bid should be 6S. If instead South bids 6H, knowing that North has a five card Heart suit, then let's now see what happens to the contract of 6H.

With Hearts as trumps, North has 2 Club losers. There is no solution for these Club losers. He can try the Diamond finesse but it fails and North goes down one in 6 Hearts. If South plays the contract in 6 Spades, then he can ruff two Diamonds in North hand (dummy) and then draw trump, pitching 2

Clubs from South hand on the long Heart suit in dummy. making 7. *Be careful to ruff one Diamond HIGH in dummy so that you retain a small Spade in North hand with which to return to South hand and draw the remaining trump.* Note therefore that the 4-4 fit is superior as after drawing trumps, you get discards (pitches) on the "lopsided" suit. With the 5-3 fit as trumps, there are no pitches possible with the 4-4 suit.

FORCING DECLARER TO RUFF

6

N North
 ♠ 7
 ♥ A8632
 ♦ 10954
 ♣ 1096

W West
 ♠ 643
 ♥ QJ5
 ♦ 7632
 ♣ AKJ

E East
 ♠ AKQJ10
 ♥ K1097
 ♦ J
 ♣ Q85

S South
 ♠ 9852
 ♥ 4
 ♦ AKQ8
 ♣ 7432

4♠ East
 NS: 0
 EW: 0

WES NOR EAS SOU
 1♠ P
 2♦ P 2♥ P
 2♠ P 4♠ P
 P P

Diamond Ace is the best lead, NOT your singleton. You do not want to ruff when you have four trump.

RULE: When you have 4 or more good trump and are a defender, you must lead your longest OTHER suit, your NON-TRUMP SUIT.

You wish to **FORCE** declarer to ruff. So you hope that declarer's hand is short in the suit you choose to lead.

Play it out and you will see that declarer cannot make this if South and North lead Diamonds at every turn, whenever they get the lead.

When North wins with Heart Ace, she should continue leading D's and not try to give South a ruff in Hearts. East cannot make this hand on this defence. East will "lose control of the hand because South will end up with more trumps than declarer.