

## Declarer Play Problems - 6

Thursday mini-lesson – September,  
2026

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### The Crossruff

- Continuing our series on declarer play techniques, let's look at situations where a **crossruff** is appropriate
- We have already seen on other occasions that taking a ruff in the short-trump hand gives you *an extra trick*, whereas ruffing in the long-trump hand *does not*

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## The Crossruff

- Sometimes it's not practical to take ruffs in one hand and then draw trumps in the other
- Instead there are times when it's better to *not draw trumps at all* and take ruffs in both hands, making each of your trumps separately
- This play is known as a **crossruff**

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## Crossruff – Example 1

- One of the most common scenarios for a crossruff occurs when your trumps are weak in both hands. Look at the following example:

|           |             |             |
|-----------|-------------|-------------|
|           | ♠ A 8 6 2   |             |
|           | ♥ A 8 7 3   |             |
|           | ♦ -         |             |
| ♠ K 9     | ♣ A 9 7 4 3 | ♠ Q T 3     |
| ♥ J 9 6 4 |             | ♥ K T 5 2   |
| ♦ K 8 6 2 |             | ♦ J T 9 5 4 |
| ♣ K Q J   | ♠ J 7 5 4   | ♣ T         |
|           | ♥ Q         |             |
|           | ♦ A Q 7 3   |             |
|           | ♣ 8 6 5 2   |             |

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### Crossruff – Example 1 cont.

- West leads the K♣ against your 4♠ contract
- Looking at the diagram, you may think you are destined to lose two ♣s and two trump tricks
- However, there is a chance to make several tricks by ruffing ♥s and ♦s
- If you can make *six small trumps* by ruffing the red suits, your *four aces* will bring the total up to ten!

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### Crossruff – Example 1 cont.

- You win the ♣ lead, play the A♥ and ruff a ♥
- Then play the A♦, and now ruff alternately in ♦s and ♥s
- You are pleased to see the defenders have to follow suit all the way
- You soon have nine tricks in front of you and dummy's A♠ will make it ten
- In effect the opponents 2 high ♣s and 2 high trumps are compressed into the last 3 tricks

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## Crossruff – Example 1 cont.

|                      |                      |                        |
|----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
|                      | ♠ A <del>8 6 2</del> |                        |
|                      | ♥ A <del>8 7 3</del> |                        |
|                      | ♦ -                  |                        |
| ♠ K 9                | ♣ A 9 7 4 3          | ♠ Q T 3                |
| ♥ J <del>9 6 4</del> |                      | ♥ K <del>T 5 2</del>   |
| ♦ K <del>8 6 2</del> |                      | ♦ J <del>T 9 5 4</del> |
| ♣ K Q J              | ♠ J <del>7 5 4</del> | ♣ 7                    |
|                      | ♥ Q                  |                        |
|                      | ♦ A <del>Q 7 3</del> |                        |
|                      | ♣ 8 6 5 2            |                        |

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## Crossruff – Example 2

- On the next crossruff example you are in 4♥ - your trumps are stronger but you do not have the entries to take several ruffs in one hand before drawing trumps in the other

|             |             |           |
|-------------|-------------|-----------|
|             | ♠ A Q 5 2   |           |
|             | ♥ K Q T 2   |           |
|             | ♦ T         |           |
| ♠ J 9 8 3   | ♣ Q 7 6 3   | ♠ K T 6 4 |
| ♥ 7 4       |             | ♥ 9 8 6   |
| ♦ K Q J 9 2 |             | ♦ 6 5     |
| ♣ K 4       | ♠ 7         | ♣ A J 9 5 |
|             | ♥ A J 5 3   |           |
|             | ♦ A 8 7 4 3 |           |
|             | ♣ T 8 2     |           |

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## Crossruff – Example 2 cont.

- West leads the K  against your game in hearts  
How should you play the contract?
- Suppose you fail to make a plan and draw trumps straight away - Where will 10 tricks come from?
- You are *woefully* short of high cards and will fall well short of your target
- A better idea is to aim to score *your two side aces along with all eight trump tricks*. To achieve this you must score *all* of your trump tricks *separately*, by taking ruffs in both hands

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## Crossruff – Example 2 cont.

- You win the  lead with the ace and ruff a  immediately
- You take this first ruff with dummy's low trump, leaving the high trumps for later – when there will be more risk of an overruff
- You cash dummy's A  and ruff a  in the South hand, again using a low trump
- When you ruff a second  in the dummy, East shows out

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### Crossruff – Example 2 cont.

- Since this ruff is with a high trump, East cannot overruff
- You ruff a ♠ with the last low trump in your hand and the contract is now guaranteed when this passes by safely
- Now a ♦ ruff, a ♠ ruff and a fourth ♦ ruff – all with high trumps – bring your total to nine tricks
- Since the ace of trumps is still in your hand you make the game exactly

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### Crossruff – Example 2 cont.

- The main point of this deal is that you took the early ruffs with low trumps, saving the high trumps for the later ruffs

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### Crossruff – Example 3

- The next deal illustrates a second important point to remember when doing a crossruff

|             |             |             |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|             | ♠ A Q 9 6   |             |
|             | ♥ A K 5 3   |             |
|             | ♦ A 9 7 2   |             |
| ♠ 4         | ♣ 5         | ♠ 8 5 3 2   |
| ♥ Q J T 9 7 |             | ♥ 8 2       |
| ♦ Q T 8 6 4 |             | ♦ J 5       |
| ♣ T 3       | ♠ K J T 7   | ♣ K Q 9 8 4 |
|             | ♥ 6 4       |             |
|             | ♦ K 3       |             |
|             | ♣ A J 8 7 2 |             |

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### Crossruff – Example 3 cont.

- West leads the Q♥ against your ambitious 7♠ contract - How would you play the contract?
- You have five winners in the side suits
- If you can make *all* eight trump tricks separately, this will bring your total to thirteen tricks
- You can ruff four ♣s in dummy, and two ♥s and two ♦s in your own hand

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### Crossruff – Example 3 cont.

- Suppose you win the ♥ lead with the ace, cash the K♥ and play a third ♥ to ruff it
- Disaster! East will discard a ♦
- When you next try to cash two top ♦s, East will ruff the second round and you will go down
- **Before embarking on a crossruff it's very important to cash all your side suit winners first**