

THE STRIP & THROW IN (otherwise known as THE END PLAY)



A Summary by Barbara Seagram BARBARA SEAGRAM SCHOOL OF BRIDGE

Whenever you find yourself in a contract which depends on a finesse, consider whether you can execute a strip & throw in.

Consider the following hand: Opening lead from West is the King ♡.

♠	♡	◇	♣
9	A	K	K
8	10	J	Q
7		2	3
6			
5			

♠	♡	◇	♣
A	3	A	A
K	2	10	5
Q		5	2
J			
10			

THINK OF THE FOUR SUITS AS FOLLOWS:

- The trump suit... Draw as many as necessary, leaving at least one in the dummy.
- The “don’t touch” suit... This is the one you do not wish to touch but wish the opponents to lead for you. You must identify this suit at the beginning of the hand so that you don't play it yourself.
- The strip suit... Play this side suit in its entirety, remembering to ruff any extra cards in either hand in the other hand.
STRIP COMPLETELY!!
- The exit suit... This is the suit that you intend to play in order to throw the opponents in.

You diagnose that it is the ◇ suit that you must NOT touch yourself. (The ◇ suit depends on a finesse and you may guess wrong on that finesse so DON'T play it. Avoid touching that suit at all costs.)

You win the Ace ♡.

You now determine that the STRIP suit is ♣'s. You draw trumps first (only as many as you have to, making sure to keep at least one trump in the dummy). Now play all the clubs. Note that if there had been one extra ♣ in declarer's hand, you would now have to ruff it in the dummy. One extra ♣ in dummy, you would have to trump it in declarer's hand.

You will now throw the opponents in by leading a Heart. You will find that whatever they now lead back will help you. If they lead a Heart or a Club, you will be given a sluff and a ruff. i.e. you will be able to throw away a losing Diamond from Declarer's hand and trump it in the dummy. If they lead back a Diamond, you will be given a free finesse and are guaranteed no losers in the Diamond suit.

Let's change the Diamonds in the above hand:

♠	♥	♦	♣
9	A	Q	K
8	10	5	Q
7		2	3
6			
5			

The contract is now 4 Spades. Opening lead: K Hearts.

Three potential losers in Diamonds & one in Hearts.

You must identify Diamonds as being the suit we do not wish to play ourselves but wish opponents to play for us. Draw trumps, play the strip suit and then exit with a Heart. The opponents will have to lead a Diamond for us. When they do, we will play low and opponents will win the trick. Later, however, all you have to do is play one of the high honours in Diamonds and this will force out the other remaining honour.

♠	♥	♦	♣
A	3	J	A
K	2	4	5
Q		3	2
J			
10			

Now you only have to play one of the high honours in Diamonds and force out the other remaining honour. Now you only have two losers in Diamonds.

Some people have trouble diagnosing that there are 3 diamond losers on the above hand. Note that if you have to play this suit yourself and opponents defend properly, you will have to lose all 3 diamond tricks. Lay out the cards at home and give West K9x Diamonds and East A10xx. If South leads a ♦ herself, West should play small. East will win the Q ♦ with the A ♦. If you have to play the suit again yourself, you will always lose three cards in that suit. If opponents have to lead the ♦ suit for you, you will be able to develop one trick in this suit.

STOP & THINK AT TRICK ONE !

This hand & some of commentary by Eddie Kantar

Dir: North

Vul: E-W

North
S. A432
H. J432
D. A8
C. KQ4

West

S. 76

H. A109

D. J943

C. 10865

East

S. 85

H. K75

D. K10765

C. 732

South

S. KQJ109

H. Q86

D. Q2

C. AJ9

North	East	South	West
1C	Pass	1S	Pass
2S	Pass	4S	All Pass

Opening lead: D3

Bidding Commentary: As North, with this distribution, if you are not strong enough to open 1NT, you are not strong enough to jump raise partner's 1H or 1S response to 3H or 3S. You must content yourself with a single raise.

Lead Commentary: As West, with a choice of two unbid suits to lead, lead the stronger. However, if one of the suits is headed by an ace, lead the other.

Play Commentary: As South, considering diamonds in isolation, play low at trick one hoping West has led from the king. However, looking at the hand as a unit, you should notice that you have a 'heart problem' meaning you would rather the opponents lead hearts first. You can force a heart lead by using an equally divided suit (diamonds) as your throw-in suit after the hand has been stripped.

Play Commentary #2: Win the DA, draw trumps, strip clubs, and exit with the DQ. No matter who wins the trick, that defender must either lead a heart limiting your heart losses to two tricks or concede a ruff and sluff. If given a ruff and sluff, discard a heart from South, the shorter heart hand, and ruff in North, the longer heart hand.

Defensive Commentary: Hearts is the critical suit. Whichever side breaks hearts first loses a trick. If declarer misplays the hand and winds up leading hearts first, **second hand plays low if a low heart is led and covers if an honor is led.**

This is called an end play because it normally happens near the end of the hand. It is better described by some as a "strip and throw in" as you will do best to 'strip' the hand and 'throw' the opponents in. Hearts is a problem suit & you must learn to assess this suit as having 3 losers. If you have to play it yourself, you will lose 3 tricks in that suit. Thus you must get your opponents to lead hearts for you. If they are 'thrown in' and lead something else other than hearts then you must discard a heart from your hand and ruff in the dummy. Always ruff in the "short trump suit hand." This act by defenders is called giving declarer a 'sluff and a ruff'. It is always generous of the opponents to do this but sometimes opponents are given no choice in an 'end play' situation.

Is 50% good enough? by Barbara Seagram

Would you buy a used car from a salesman who told you that your brakes would only work 50% of the time? Wouldn't you rather walk? Or at least find some other way to get there?

As all of us know, finessees only work 50% of the time but we tend to be finesse-aholics. Let's try an alternative. If you should find yourself in a contract that depends on a finesse, think about whether you can use a strip and throw-in (otherwise known as an end-play, because it tends to happen near the end of the hand)

	109	
	K8642	
	K83	
	K107	
KJ73		Q8652
10		93
J1092		654
Q432		986
	A4	
Opening lead: DJ	AQJ75	
	AQ7	
	AJ5	

You are South and you arrive in the contract of 6H, and West leads the DJ. Counting your losers, you find 1 S loser, no H losers, no D losers and one potential loser in C. West has led the DJ. At times like this, you now need to do your stretching exercises -- lean to the left, lean to the right to see which of your opponents has the CQ. (Just kidding! ☺) If they are holding their cards close to their chests, do you now fall back on guessing which way to take the C finesse?

In C, you have a "two-way finesse" i.e. a choice of which way to finesse. This is in contrast to a situation where you may have the C K32 opposite the C AJ4; now you have no choice as to how to finesse. However, whichever way you to decide to go, if you come to down to a straight guess, your finesse will only work 50% of the time. Let's see if we can increase your chances of making this hand to 100%.

We'll assume you win the first trick with the DA and now you draw trump (only as many as necessary, in this case two rounds). You now 'strip' the D suit (*play it in its entirety*). Resolve to NOT lead the C suit yourself. Now play the S Ace and give away a S to charity. Suppose West wins the S trick. What would you like him to lead now? For that matter, if East wins the S trick, he has the same problem. If either opponent leads a S or a D, you sluff a C from your hand and ruff in dummy. If they lead a C, you play low from the next hand and you will automatically win three club tricks.

This is the "end" position:

	S ---	
	H K86	
	D ---	
	C K107	
S K		S Q86
H ---		H ---
D 10		D ---
C Q432		C 986
	S ---	
	H J75	
	D ---	
	C AJ5	

What you have done here is to put your opponents in an impossible situation. Whatever they do now will be give you a trick.

The principle of 'throwing your opponents in' (putting them on lead to do your dirty work) occurs in other situations. Here is a cute example:

	10976	
	Q87	
	K87	
	A64	
QJ82		----
J109		5432
643		J1092
1098		QJ752
	AK543	
	AK6	
	AQ5	
	K3	

You are South in 6S. West has led the HJ. You win lead in your hand and start drawing trump (S Ace). Suddenly everything comes to a screeching halt! RHO fails to follow suit and your 6H contract at first glance seems doomed to fail.

Now hang on. Logic must prevail. If you cash your SK, you are now giving up completely. You cannot make your slam after that. So stop pulling trump immediately. Play all the other suits (stripping) and pray that West has to follow all the way. Don't forget to play the third C from dummy and trump it in your hand: when you are stripping, strip completely!

Now play either the S10 from dummy or a small S from your hand toward the S10 in dummy. West will win with the S J and here is the end position:

	S 109	
	H ---	
	D ---	
	C ---	
S Q8		S ---
H---		H ---
D---		D J
C ---		C Q
	S K5	
	H ---	
	D ---	
	C ---	

West, having gained the lead with S J now finds himself in a dreadful predicament: whatever S he now leads gives you the contract!

Remember this kind of tactic, and they'll all be lined up to play with you.