

SHORTENING DECLARER'S TRUMPS?

by
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A843			K96		5
76			K102		QJ98543
KJ976			5432		A10
43			J82		765
			QJ1072		
			A		
			Q8		
			AKQ109		
South	West	East	North		
1 S	Pass	2 S	Pass		
4 S					

West found himself on lead. He wanted to lead one of his doubletons. After all he had four trumps and could maybe score some extra tricks by ruffing. We love to lead short suits. Singletons and doubletons. My hero, Eddie Kantar, says that we love leading short suits so much that we would lead a void if we could.

Rule: When you as a defender have four of declarer's trumps, you should lead your longest **other** (non-trump) suit in hopes that declarer is short in that suit. Since you have five of them, the odds are that declarer will be short in that suit. This is called the forcing defense. You will be forcing declarer to ruff in her hand, the hand where usually the most trumps are located, often called the long hand. This will aggravate declarer no end as you, the defender, will end up with more trumps than declarer. It's not pretty and it is the most brutal defense. It is sometimes referred to as "**tapping**" or "**punching**" the declarer.

With all that in mind, West led D 7 versus 4 C. Partner won the Ace and returned D 10. West won D King and returned yet another D. Declarer was forced to ruff in her hand. Declarer started to pull trump. She reckoned she would only lose the Ace of trump and the rest was a walk in the park. West won the first round of trump with S Ace and led another D. Oops, now declarer had to ruff a second time in her hand. She led another high S and East failed to follow suit. Now West had three S left and Declarer only had two.

When declarer played C AKQ, West scored her second trump trick and when the smoke cleared, the result was Down one.

On the hand above, declarer was powerless to get out of this mess. Let's see what he can do on this next hand.

			4		
			AKQ103		
			A42		
			J1095		
AKJ32					Q105
9					82
KQ107					J985
A32					K864
			9876		
			J7654		
			63		
			Q7		
North	East	South	West		
1 H	Pass	4 H	4 S		
Pass	Pass	Pass			

It is worthy of note that North South were not vulnerable and East West were vulnerable. This is an opportunity for North South to make it tough for East West. South assumes that West has the balance of the points so preempts with his 4 H bid making it tougher for West to enter the auction. This bid is sometimes called "the Weak Freak" and shows a bad hand with 5 trumps.

As it turns out, if West can make 4 S, it would have been right for North to continue on to 5 H as that contract will only be down 2. Being minus 100 would be way better than being minus 620 if EW is allowed to make 4 S. Even doubled: Minus 300 is better than minus 620.

Let's see how 4 S will fare.

North leads H Ace, followed by H King. West ruffs the second H lead. Oops. Now his trump suit has been shortened in his hand. If he now draws all the trumps (which break badly this time), he still has to attack his D suit which is missing the Ace.

When North wins with D Ace, he can now "run" his H suit and have his way with West. This is ugly. Declarer has "lost control" of the hand because his trump suit is depleted.

Even if West delays drawing trumps and attacks his D suit sooner, North can duck his D Ace for one round, win the second round of D and now give South a D ruff.

How could West have saved the day and made his contract. On this hand, West has an automatic C loser. On the second H lead, he should simply discard a small C. This play is called a Loser on a Loser. Now, whatever North leads next, West cannot be hurt as he still has a goodly supply of trumps.

Being forced to ruff in the long hand is always troublesome for declarer when he is dealt a normal supply of trumps. As a defender, it is always right to lead high cards in suits which dummy has when declarer is out of that suit. As a declarer, look out; see if you can pitch a loser instead of ruffing, in case you won't be able to handle the shortened supply of trumps.

OPENING LIGHT IN THIRD OR FOURTH SEAT & THE DRURY CONVENTION

You will open light in third seat if you have a good suit. You need 11 or more points (including distribution). Do not open light in third or fourth seat with Qxxx KJx Axx Jxx. Your objective in opening light in third seat is to make it tough for the person in fourth seat to get into the act or to get partner to lead that suit. So make it a good suit. P – P and you have xx AQxxx Axx xxx, by all means open 1H.

If it goes P – P – and you have AKJx Kxxx xxxx xx Open 1S. Yes, partner will expect you to have 5 cards in that suit but that's okay. Your 1S opener has made it tough for opponents now to bid and if opponents buy the contract and partner gets on lead, she will lead a S. Mission accomplished. This is an effective tactic.

OPENING LIGHT IN FOURTH SEAT

Opener will not open bad hands in fourth seat. When you open in fourth seat, you should expect a plus score. It's also good to hold the spade suit to reduce the chances of being outbid. You do NOT open with a weak 2 or 3 or 4 in the Pass out seat.

There is something called CANSINO COUNT (Also known as Pearson Points). It dictates that in 4th seat, if you DO NOT HAVE a full opening bid, then you add up the number of HCP in your hand and also add to that the NUMBER OF CARDS YOU OWN in the spade suit. If that number comes to 15, you may open the bidding. There is a natural advantage to the side that has spades as it is the boss suit. If you open in 4th seat light with let's say 1H and you only own 2 little spades, then the guy on your left may now have spades. He can now enter the auction with 1S. You have now allowed the opponents into the act when you could simply passed out the hand and not opened at all.

You should evaluate your opponents also when deciding to open light in 4th seat. Any time it is close, see who you are playing against. If you are playing against the best pair at the club, and it goes P – P – P to you, say Pass! You will do better than having to struggle and fight against perfect defense or competitive bidding. BUT if you find yourself playing

against a gentle pair, go for it and open. They will have trouble defending or bidding against you and you will buy the contract. You will usually get a plus this way. Don't let on later why you opened light in 4th seat though!

NOTE: In the pass out seat, if you bid 2H, you are not promising a weak hand. You never preempt in the pass out seat. Preempts are made to steal bidding space and make it tough for your opponents to enter the auction. You can pass after P – P – P to you and you get no points on your side of the score sheet but they get none on THEIR side also. IF you bid 2H with a weak hand in pass out seat, they (opponents) may now bid 2S and make it, scoring a positive score for their side.

So what does 2H in pass out seat mean? It must mean something. You must not have a bid lying around in your toolbox that is never used.

P-P-P to you and you have

x
AKJxxx
Axx
xxx

You might think of bidding 1H but bid 2H in pass out seat. This promises 13-15 points and a good quality 6 card suit. It is simply more descriptive. Partner has a clearer vision of what is in your hand now.

P-P-P to you and you have

AQJxxxx
xx
xx
KQx

Bid 3S. This will show 13-15 points and a 7 card suit in this seat. Ditto with 4S which will show 13-15 points and an eight card suit of quality.

THE DRURY CONVENTION

Drury is a most useful convention. It was devised by Douglas Drury, a Canadian, who used to play with a well-known lawyer from Toronto, Eric Murray. Eric used to open very light in third seat and Doug always wanted to know if his partner had opened light or if he had a full opening bid,

If partner opened 1S in third seat and you had

S Q753 H KQ2 D K765 C 97

or

S K75 H Q632 D AJ76 C75

If you bid 3 S and partner has opened light, the problem is that you may well be too high and she will go down one.

So, instead, would you choose to bid 2S? NO! If opener had 15 points and you have these lovely limit raise hands, you would miss game if you bid only 2S.

ENTER THE DRURY CONVENTION!

***NOTE:** The original convention was called Drury and had different treatments which are no longer popular. The most commonly used version is called Reverse Drury.*

Drury is used **only when partner has opened one of a major in either third or fourth chair.**

REQUIREMENTS:

3 or more of partner's major suit trumps
10 or more points, including distribution
How does it work?

Note that if opponents enter the auction bidding a suit or NT, then the opportunity to use Drury is gone. i.e. There is NO Drury in competition. You can however agree to still play Drury if opponents make a takeout double.

Here is how Reverse Drury works. After partner opens 1S or 1H in 3rd or 4th seat, a 2C bid by you is artificial (fake) and shows 10 or more points (Including distribution) and 3 or more trumps. If opener has opened a sub minimum hand, he will rebid two of his suit, and you will pass. This way, you avoid the three level which may well be too high.

Please understand that some people play this convention differently.

Many players believe that the opener will describe his hand as follows (after partner bids 2C):

2 of his major shows a SUB minimum (he opened light in 3rd or 4th seat.

2D shows a full opening bid or better.

If S's is the agreed on trump suit, 2H as rebid by opener shows a full opening bid and says that opener also has at least four cards in H suit. This would be useful in case responder also has four H. The 4-4 fit is best of all, even when you have a 5-3 fit in the other major as it allows you to make discards on the side 5 card suit.

GETTING FANCY:

But if you want to go a little bit further, you can play that a bid by responder of 2C shows only three trumps and 2D guarantees 4 or more trumps...still a limit raise but the joy of having four trumps in dummy cannot be underestimated. This helps opener a lot in evaluating his hand if his trump holding is weak. Opener's rebids have the same meaning as after a 2C bid.

Barbara's recommendation: If you are playing Drury for the very first time, keep it simple.

If partner has opened in 3rd. seat or 4th seat (i.e. it has gone Pass-Pass to her or Pass-Pass-Pass) then you can bid 2C to show 10 or more points (including distribution) and 3 or more of her major.

[DO try to remember that your 2C bid says nothing about C's. (If you have a long C suit and 10-12 points, you will have to respond 3C to partner's opening bid of 1 of a major.)]

OPENER: Nice and simple: Here is what I suggest: Evaluate (and re-evaluate) your hand... after partner has raised you by bidding 2C. If you now have:

16 points, now bid 4 of your major.

15 points, now bid 3 of your major, asking partner if she has 10? 11? 12? If 11 or 12, then she can now bid 4 of the major.

13 or 14 revalued points OR LESS: Bid 2 of your major which indicates a lack of interest in going to game.

What would you do if you opened (first chair) and held:

AQxxx

Ax

Qxx

Xxx

You open 1S and partner bids 3S, what will you bid now?

ANSWER: You should Pass. You have a dead minimum.

So you see, it is the same thing, when partner bids 2C after your 3rd seat opening bid, if you have a minimum hand such as this, you will bid 2S in your rebid after partner's 2C Drury. This shows a lack of interest in game, since responder passed to start with. The auction does not get too high, thanks to Drury.

References: Larry Matheny & Larry Cohen

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.

	AQ108	
	A432	
	AK86	
	5	
42		653
<u>K</u> QJ10		9875
1092		43
9832		KQJ10
	KJ97	
	6	
	QJ75	
	A764	

South 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 D.

South must ruff all his C in dummy, returning to his hand once with the Queen of D 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 S 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 D and claim: "The rest are mine."

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

	A852	
	KJ53	
	KJ72	
	J	
<u>K</u> Q103		J764
A42		Q1086
86		109
9853		KQ10
	9	
	97	
	AQ543	
	A7642	

South 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 C 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 S from dummy in declarer's hand. Do not pull ANY trumps at all. You will need to ruff all 4 C from South hand with dummy's trump.

This is a perfect, classic cross-ruff hand. These come up rarely.
One more...with an important adjunct.

	QJ102	
	AK76	
	A753	
	3	
9876		5
32		QJ54
<u>Q</u> J1064		K98
K2		J10987
	AK43	
	1098	
	2	
	AQ654	

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 D Ace and now what?

If you embark on your cross-ruff now, then, while you are ruffing your losing C in the dummy, West will pitch one or two H. Now, when you have not pulled trumps and go to play the Ace and King of H, West will be able to ruff your H Ace and King.

MORAL OF STORY: When you are cross-ruffing and have top cards in a "side-suit" (H, 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.