

## TIP FROM BARBARA & ALEX

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	North	
	S 8743	
	H KQJ3	
West	D 10843	East
	C K	
S AJ		S 63
H 10865		H 942
D 95	South	D AKQJ7
C QJ1098	S KQ1095	C 752
	H A7	
	D 62	
	C A643	

South opened the above hand 1S. West passed and North bid 3S, a limit raise in Spades according to what this pair was playing. East had had a long day and frantically wanted his partner to lead a Diamond so he bid 4D, a very aggressive overbid. South bid 4S which ended the auction.

West dutifully led the Diamond 9 and East won Diamond Jack, then led Diamond Ace followed by the Diamond King.

South ruffed the Diamond King with the Spade King. What should West play on this trick?

Answer: This is something that many players get wrong. It is intuitive to overruff with the Ace. If West overruffs, it is the last trick that EW will get. Because South can now drop West's Jack with his Queen.

So let's have West instead discard a Club on this trick and look what happens. South leads a Club to dummy's King and leads a Spade. East follows and whatever Spade South plays now will be wrong. If South plays the Spade Queen, West wins this trick and will now also score the Spade Jack.

At trick three, if South had ruffed the Diamond with the S 10 or 9, then indeed West would overruff. West's sole goal is to take two trump tricks which cannot happen if he overruffs the King or Queen at trick 3.

# CLAIMING & ETHICS AT THE TABLE

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Some of this is mostly applicable to face-to-face play but please adjust accordingly to apply to online play.

## When things go wrong

Did someone lead out of turn? Did you forget to Alert something? Do you think there was a revoke? Do you think that someone did something that might be against the Laws of Duplicate Bridge or the ACBL regulations? Call the director. Let me repeat that: If something strange happens, call the director. Do not make the ruling yourself and most importantly, do not intimidate the opponents by telling them what to do.

Do you have a strange and wondrous partnership agreement? This might be an explicate agreement — you and your partner have discussed the agreement — or, it might be implicate — you have not discussed it but you know what is going on by prior experience. In either case, you have the duty to make sure the opponents are informed.

## Claims and Concessions

First, let us define the terms. A claim is saying that you will take a certain number of the remaining tricks. By the Laws, it never applies to a trick currently in play. As an example, eight tricks have been played. One of the active players (either defender or the declarer) says “I will take four more tricks.” That is a claim.

A concession is saying you will lose a certain number of tricks. The claim above includes a concession of one trick.

When you claim you need to do the following:

1. Put your cards face up on the table.
2. State how many tricks you will take.
3. Explain your play in detail.

Failure to explain your play will often lead to an unhappy ending for the claimer. For example, if you fail to mention that you will draw trumps (assuming one of the opponents still holds one or more trumps) this means that you cannot lead a trump until you have no more non-trump cards to lead. There is a good reason for this. It is assumed that you forgot there was an opponent's trump still in play. After all, if you knew there was a trump out, you would have stated how you would handle it in step 3 above.

If you are a defender, your claim cannot state that your partner will play a certain card at a certain time. Your claim must include such details as unblocking a suit (example: dummy holds the QJT9 in clubs and you hold AK3 in clubs. Your explanation should include something like “I cash the ace and king of clubs followed by the small club to dummy.” It cannot be assumed that the claimer will not make a careless mistake. However, the claimer cannot be forced to do something that is not a normal, if inferior or somewhat sloppy, line play.

For example, If the claimer says I am going to draw trump, it will be assumed they will draw trumps by leading trumps from the top down. Similarly, if the claim includes a ruff, the claimer cannot be forced to underruff. In fact, if the claimer intends to underruff or to underlead a higher trump (yes, sometimes those can be the best play), the claimer must clearly state this. Note that dummy is not allowed to say anything (yet).

Once the claim is made and explained, the opponents can either accept or reject the claim. If a defender claims, dummy is part of the process. Both opponents must accept the claim. If either one has a problem with the claim, they should so state and if claimer does not revise the claimed number of tricks, we move to the next step.

If the claim is rejected one of two things happen. If and only if a member of the non-claiming side suggests continuing the play of the hand and if and only if all the players agree to this, the hands are picked up and play continues. None of the cards that were exposed become penalty cards and a player can use any information gained by seeing an opponent's cards. Note that there is no reason for the non-claimers to expose their hands. (In face-to-face play, play may not continue after a claim is made. The Director adjudicates all disputed claims.)

Both opponents must accept the claim. If either one has a problem with the claim, they should so state and if claimer does not revise the claimed number of tricks, it is time to call the director or to play the hand out. If all four players do not agree to play out the hand, the director needs to be called. The claimer will be asked to repeat their claim. It is important for the claimer to repeat their claim as exactly as possible. You do not get to "improve" your claim at this point; to do so is highly unethical and subject to a procedural penalty.

The director will adjudicate the claim and make a ruling. This ruling might be delayed if the director needs some time to review the hand. Once the director is called, the players cannot decide to play out the hand. Continuing the play would only occur if so, ordered by the director.

Here are two examples of how a ruling might be made:

Dummy holds AKJT54 facing declarer's 983. If declarer, the claimer, did not state whether they will finesse for the queen or play for the drop, the director will allow the claimer to win six tricks in this suit only if the queen is on-side doubleton or singleton. In other words, only if the claimer would have won these six tricks on any reasonable play of the suit. The claimer's protestation that "Of course, I would have cashed the ace first to guard against the stiff queen offside." or "I always finesse in this situation." or similar statements should be ignored.

Dummy holds AJ97 facing declarer's KT86, declarer will be assumed to mis-guess the location of the queen if this was not correctly specified in the claim.

**PLAY THESE HANDS**  
**MORE Hands by Jeff Hand professional player & teacher**  
**Commentary by Barbara**

**North**

S K  
H A8742  
D AKJ  
C A754

**South**

S AQJ10932  
H 5  
D 632  
C 62

Contract is 6S by South. Opening lead is Club King.

Plan your play before looking at the answer.

On this hand, you count your losers, as we always do in a trump suit contract.

South has 0 Spade losers; 0 Heart losers, 1 potential Diamond losers and 1 Club loser. That is 2 losers which is 1 too many in 6S.

If you pull trump first, you will end up with 1 Diamond loser and 1 Club loser. When dummy has a long suit and no ruffing value (i.e. no short suit in dummy so that Declarer can ruff losers in Dummy), then it is often right to try to develop that long suit. Five-card suits in dummy are a thing of beauty.

Win Club Ace and now attack Hearts. Heart Ace and ruff a Heart in your hand. Back to dummy with S King and ruff another Heart in your hand. Now draw as many trumps as necessary. Lead the Diamond 2 to dummy's D King and ruff yet another Heart. Now Diamond 3 to dummy's Ace and play the 13th Heart in dummy. On that good Heart, discard the Club 2.

Now you can do the Diamond finesse in case you can make an overtrick.

Here's one more:

**North**

S 9  
H AQ109  
D A1087  
C A632

**South**

S A1042  
H KJ87  
D 6  
C 10874

Contract is 4H by South. Opening lead is Diamond King.

Plan your play before looking at the answer.

When you count your losers, you find that you have:

Spades: 3  
Hearts: 0  
Diamonds: 0  
Clubs: 3

We count losers in Declarer's hand, looking to dummy to see how dummy can help us with high cards.

This hand is a perfect cross ruff hand. Such a hand comes up very rarely. You have way too many losers BUT you have a singleton Spade in dummy so you can ruff three Spade losers from Declarer's hand with dummy's trump. In order to be able to get back to your hand over and over to keep ruffing those Spades in dummy, you can ruff Diamonds in your hand and then ruff more Spades.

This does mean that you cannot afford to pull trump at all. So, look what happens if you just cross-ruff. Near the end of the hand, West will have discarded her Club Queen (singleton) when you played your last Spade. Thus, West will now ruff your Club Ace. Oh dear!

In a true cross-ruff, Declarer must first cash her side-suit (non-trump) winners before defenders get to pitch cards in those suits. And then Declarer can embark on the cross-ruff.