



April (Fools) 2006 BridgeHands Newsletter

Trump Power: Ruff, sluff, cross-ruff, and ruff it out

April 2006

Dear BridgeHands Friends,

Welcome to our "April Fools" issue of ***Bridgehands*** – we hope you are ready to add some more tricks (literally and figuratively) during the play of the hand. Following last month's ruffling theme, this month we will put ruffing play into action, adding several tactics to our ruffing arsenal. Our lesson will focus on two of declarer's favorite ploys, ruffing and sluffing; next month we will follow-up with cross-ruffing and ruffing out a side-suit.

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With all the "Rules of" ([15](#), [20](#), [Anticipation](#)) discussed in prior issues, can there be more? For sure, yes! This month let's go to the head of the list and examine the [Rule of 1](#), a useful tactic during play.

As dummy, are you allowed to help the declarer in any way? If you said "no", then you should brush up on Bridge Laws [42](#) and [43](#) and learn more about the three dummy rights and limitations. For instance, did you know that if you look at the declarer's hand during play, you've lost the three rights? [Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness](#) may be "unalienable rights" in the United States Declaration of Independence, but in our fair game of Bridge be careful or you can lose your "qualified" rights!

Are you looking for an extra edge to literally see through your opponents' cards? Then our April issue has just the device for you! [Step up and be the first at your table to sport your very own xray vision glasses at the table!](#) Better yet, using this approach you do not have to read any Bridge book (Right Through The Pack). Okay, we were just pulling your leg – April Fools! We hope you enjoyed our well-meaning prank.

Note: Viewing the hands below requires your EMAIL reader to use "fixed fonts" (not proportional). If you have problems reading this document, please view our [online web-based copy](#) or [Adobe Acrobat PDF file](#) suitable for printing.

If you missed a back issue of a **BridgeHands** Newcomer-Novice eMag newsletters, here's the links:

[Issue 0 - Finesses](#)

[Issue 1 - Promotions](#)

[Issue 2 - Notrump Leads](#)

[Issue 3 - Leads Against Suit Contract](#)

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Trump Power: Ruff, sluff, cross-ruff, and ruff it out

Last month we covered *ruffing* – declarer (or defender) tactics to gain extra tricks. You will recall we learned that in suit contracts, the declarer can turn side suit shortness into strength. Particularly in the dummy, side suit shortness can help the declarer eliminate losers. The question remains, when do we use one of these tactics? Fundamentally, once we get a look at the dummy, we begin to develop the best plan to maximize our tricks based on the attributes of the dummy and our declarer hand. We begin by evaluating our sure and likely winners. Do we have enough tricks to fulfill our contract or need to develop extra tricks? Assuming ruffing is necessary, should we first draw trump, begin a ruffing play, or sluff losers right away? This month will be the first of two lessons discussing ruffing and sluffing. Off we go.

I. **Ruffing:** In the basic ruffing tactic, the declarer plays the side suit, perhaps several times by regaining the lead in declarer's hand, making good use of the dummy trumps to ruff losers. Using the basic ruff makes sense when the dummy's main feature is a short suit opposite declarer's losers in the respective suit. Contract: 4 Spades.

	Declarer	Dummy
S	A K Q 7 6	4 3 2
H	5 4 3 2	6
D	A K Q	J 10 9
C	2	K Q 7 6 5 4

Imagine North leads the Heart Ace, takes a quick look at the dummy and switches to a trump on trick two. Opponents are on the right track, trying to minimize dummy ruffing power. On this hand, we clearly are best ruffing two of the remaining three Heart losers using dummy's two trump. We have plenty of Diamond entries back to the declarer's hand and continue ruffing. Doing so, we lose 1 Club and 2 Hearts. Should we mistakenly draw trump immediately (opponents are usually 3-1 or 2-2 with four (outstanding cards), we end up losing four Hearts and at least one Club. What a difference! But let's say you aren't blessed with a 5-3 trump fit. Even with a 5-2 fit, our ruffing tactic may be still be the best bet.
Contract: 4 Spades

	Declarer	Dummy
S	A K Q J 10	3 2
H	A 4 3 2	6
D	A K	J 10 9
C	A K	8 7 6 5 4 3 2

North leads the Heart King to our Ace. If we draw trump we would ultimately lose three Heart tricks. And similar to the prior hand, we begin by ruffing the second Heart, come back to our hand with the Diamond Ace (not the long Club suit). Now we can ruff a second Heart with the remaining trump in dummy. Now is the time to draw the opponents' trump. Using the ruffing strategy, we could make 12 tricks, a small slam, while we only make 10 tricks if we initially pull trump instead of ruffing.

On hands like the two above, our path was clear. The declarer never really had any other tactics, promotion or finessing, to develop extra tricks. Now let's try a variation that is a bit trickier. Contract: 4 Spades.

	Declarer	Dummy
S	Q J 10 8 7	A K 2
H	A 4 3	2
D	6 5	K 4 3 2
C	A 8 7	6 5 4 3 2

North leads the Club King, won by your Ace. You cash your Heart Ace and ruff a Heart in dummy. With both your Aces gone, what next? That depends! Did you ruff in the dummy with the 2 or a top honor? If you planned ahead and ruffed with either the Ace or King, you've learned to plan ahead and appreciate the importance of transportation! Doing so, you could then play the Spade 2 and overtake the trump in your hand, providing a valuable entry to allow a second ruff in the dummy. After all,

your side has all the top trumps so it wasn't wasteful to ruff with a high trump. There is no getting around losing two Club and one or two Diamonds, depending of whether the Diamond finesse wins (if North holds the Diamond Ace). However we would like to avoid losing even one Heart trick if possible. Here the key point is, consider entries in addition to the ruffing in dummy. Over time, you will develop a keen eye for these features.

For our last hand, we will only have a 4-4 trump fit. Could a ruffing tactic be successful? Contract: 4 Spades.

S	K 7 6 5	A 4 3 2
H	K 4 3 2	A 7 6 5
D	A 3 2	K 6 5 4
C	A 4 3	2

North leads the Diamond Queen – we can see this hand requires some planning. From the declarer's perspective, the losers might be one Spade, two Hearts, one Diamond, and two Clubs – totaling six losers. If the contract was 4 Spades, we need to hold our losers to three tricks. Again, ruffing in the dummy short suit provides a winning strategy. However, this time we can afford to first play two rounds of trump just in case South has a singleton Diamond (see Rule of 1 later in this newsletter). And since we have all the top honor entries to get to our declarer hand, there's no worry that an opponent will get in and lead a trump to reduce dummy's ruffing power. So after drawing two rounds of trump, we win the Diamond Ace, cash the Club Ace, and ruff a Club. Now back to our declarer hand playing a low Heart to the Heart King and ruff the remaining Club in our hand. Next we play the Diamond King and a third Diamond – assuming the opponents' Diamonds are 3- 2, we are okay losing either a Diamond trick and a Spade or two Diamonds if opponent wishes to use their last trump in that manner. So if all works well, we lose one Heart, one Spade, and one Diamond – nicely done.

II. **Sluffing** involves pitching a loser on partner's established suit, actually a type of promotion play. Good defenders are mindful not to fall into this trap when on lead. Good declarers, on the other hand, have other plans. Contract: 4 Spades. The declarer is South.

Dummy	
S K 3 2	
H Q 7 6	
D Q 3 2	
C K Q J 10	
West	East
S 9 8	Q J 10
H A 8	K J 10 9
D J 10 9 7 5	8 6
C 9 8 7 6	A 5 4 3
Declarer	
S A 7 6 5 4	
H 5 4 3 2	
D A K 4	
C 2	

West leads the Diamond Jack, won with dummy's Queen. Whoa, stop! Right away, the opponents' should know playing more Diamonds is not productive unless they anticipate a ruff (one long, one short). In a suit contract, opening leader (West) will not underlead an Ace. And since East could not overtake the dummy's Queen by playing "third hand high", the defenders should know declarer holds both the Diamond Ace and King. As declarer, we can see the dummy does not offer ruffing potential and there are no finesse opportunities. We seem to have six losers: one Spade trump, four Hearts and the Club Ace. Ah, but if we could first drive out the Club Ace, perhaps we could sluff several Heart losers on the dummy's Clubs – it is unlikely opponents would soon ruff our five card Club suit when they hold eight in the suit. Opponents will typically have a 5-3 split, but since we need a 4-4 to make game, we must hope for the best. So declarer leads the stiff Club 2, won by East's Ace. Here's the cards from South's perspective:

Dummy
S K 3 2
H Q 7 6
D - 3 2
C K Q J -

	East
S	Q J 10
H	K J 10 9
D	- 6
C	- 5 4 3

East held a doubleton Diamond, perhaps thinking a ruff was a good idea, but is it? Not really – East is due to win one Spade regardless of play (promotion or ruff). What happens if East returns a Diamond or a trump Spade? Declarer will win the trick, enter dummy with the Spade King and sluff three Heart losers on the Clubs. Declarer makes game, losing one Club, one Heart, and one Spade. But if East took a deep breath and returned a Heart Jack (top of broken sequence), the defenders win one Club, three Hearts, and one trump Spade to set the contract. Whether declarer or defender, be mindful of promotion plays that present an opportunity to sluff losers – the race is on!

One the next hand, the declarer will make a loser disappear as if by magic!
 Contract: 4 Spades.

	Declarer	Dummy
S	A K 3 2	Q J 10
H	3 2	6 5 4
D	K Q 3 2	A J 5 4
C	A 3 2	K 5 4

North leads Hearts and the defenders quickly win two Heart tricks and play a third Heart. Do you ruff? If you do, you will probably lose control of trump and get set! The opponents' trump distribution is often 4- 2, so if you ruff, one opponent will hold more trump than you – not a pretty picture. So before quickly ruffing the third Heart, consider your options. You are always going to lose a Club anyway – how about pitching a Club from your hand on trick 3? Great – if they play a fourth Heart you can ruff in the short side, the dummy! Now you can win four Spade trumps, four Diamonds, and two Clubs to make your game. How did we do this? Technically it's called playing a "loser on loser", but basically it's a form of **sluffing!** Very good.

Our next hand comes from prestigious Spingold National tournament, held at Washington DC, Summer 2002. The aggressive contract was 7 Hearts by South (hands rotated). During the slam bidding, declarer Roger Lord discovered partner Peggy Kaplan held the Heart and Diamond Ace. The hands were:

Kaplan
S K 10 7
H A J 3
D A K Q 9 7 4
C 2

West	East
S A 9 8 6 2	Q J 5 3
H 9 2	6 4
D 8 5 2	J 10 6 3
C 10 7 5	Q 4 3

Lord
S 4
H K Q 10 8 7 5
D --
C A K J 9 8 5

While it's beyond our scope to discuss the fancy convention (Exclusion Blackwood) Lord used to bid grand slam, suffice it to say that Lord promised a Spade void. Thus, West did not want to lead the Spade if the trick would be ruffed by the declarer and then pitch a loser on the dummy's possible Spade King. On any other lead, Roger Lord is home free, **sluffing** the Spade 4 on dummy's Diamond Ace. Incidentally, South's Exclusion Blackwood bid was actually supposed to show a void. It turns out Roger was sneaky, executing a swindle in order to sluff the low Spade on the Diamond Ace. But making such a spectacular bid is fraught with risk, reserved for those to live by the double-edged sword! By the way, the opponents protested the fallacious Exclusion Blackwood bid since Lord didn't have the promised void. But the tournament director correctly ruled that a player may violate their partnership agreement as long as partner is unaware of the violation (Law 75.B.) So while Roger's questionable bid wasn't popular with the opponents, we can appreciate how sluffing can lead to a spectacular result – **this time!**

This begs the question, is it ever right to make a bid that does not follow partnership agreements? Back in the 1920's, "[psychic bids](#)" as they were called, were quite the rave. But over time, they faded into oblivion since the net result was deemed to be negative. It's hard enough having two opponents at the table – let alone having a partner that may not be trustworthy! But there are situations when making a questionable bid is guaranteed to get good results. Enter the Garbage Stayman.

While we won't go into the Stayman this month, suffice it to say that when partner opens 1 Notrump and we respond 2 Clubs, the bid is an artificial convention asking partner to bid a 4 card major, otherwise bid 2 Diamonds. So this convention is meant to find fits in the major suits. But what about the time when we have a worthless hand and short Clubs? We'd rather partner play in any suit instead of passing and having partner go down in Notrump.

	Declarer	Dummy
S	A K 3 2	7 6 5 4
H	K 3 2	Q 6 5 4
D	K Q 3 2	7 6 5 4
C	A 3	2

Playing in 1 Notrump, partner will probably go down three making only four tricks, losing at least four Clubs (more if they are not 5-5), two Diamonds, two Hearts, and one Spade. But in a 2 Spade contract, partner will only lose one Club and make the contract, not losing four or more Club tricks played in Notrump. So in conclusion, "yes" a considerate player may find a new use for an old bid! Good luck.



Marty Bergen speaks

At BridgeHands, we invite you to sample two of Marty's leading books: [Points Schmoints](#) and [Marty Sez](#). Call Marty directly at 800 386-7432 or EMAIL mbergen@mindspring.com to place your order. Mention Coupon Code **BHB1** when you order any hardbound book and you will receive two free softbound books!

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More Points Schmoints! Pages 91-93

Truth About Reverses

No topic causes as much anxiety as the reverse. It may not be anyone's favorite, but it cannot be ignored. There is nothing wrong with hoping/praying that reverses do not occur, but all players need a

basic understanding of the concept. Besides, what is so bad about having a good hand?

Question: why didn't you write about reverses in Points Schmoints?

Answer: I was trying to avoid this very complex topic. However, after receiving so many questions about the reverse in the last few years, I felt that my students deserved an answer.

Question: How strong a hand does opener need to reverse?

Answer: With five-four distribution, opener should have at least 17 HCP. With six-four or six-five, he can have less. Here are examples of minimum, but acceptable, reverses.

West	North	East	South
1C	P	1S	P
2H			
K 6	A Q 7 6	8 5	A K J 6 5
8	K 9 5 3	K 5	A K Q 8 7 4
7	A K 7 3 2	8	A Q 10 9 6 5

Question: what about five-five distribution?

Answer; Never reverse with a five-five. The reverse guarantees that your first bid suit is longer than your second.

Question: Can opener reverse at the one level?

Answer: No, one-level bidding is just up the line.

Question: How can I recognize opener's reverse?

Answer: He must have bid a new suit at the two level-without jumping-which was higher ranking than the first suit he bid first.

Question: Does opener promise a rebid after his reverse?

Answer: Absolutely, unless responder has jumped to a game himself.

Question: If responder has bid at the two level, does anything change?

Answer: Yes. Opener does not need as big a hand to reverse.

Question: Are reverses still on in competition?

Answer: Yes. The 2H bid in the following auctions still shows a big hand:

West	North	East	South
1D	P	1S	2C
2H			

Question: Are reverses forcing to game?

Answer: No, but they are forcing for one round.

Question: Can you give me an example of a good reverse auction?

Answer: Here you go.

	North	South	
4	1D	1S	A J 6 5 3 2
A K 10 5	2H	2S	8 2
A K J 9 3 2	3D	3N	Q 4
9 8	P	P	K 7 5

North had only 15 HCP, but look at those two beautiful suits. That is a promotable hand if ever I saw one.

After North's reverse, South knew that his side had the values for game. However, he was in no hurry because opener had to take another bid. South used excellent judgment with his economical 2S bid. Had he bid 3S, North would have been forced to bid 4D and miss the cold Notrump game. This was a well-judged auction by both players.

	North	
	4	
	A K 10 5	
	A K J 9 6 3	
	9 8	
Q 8 7		K 10 9
9 7		Q J 6 4 3
8 7 5		10 2
A 10 6 3 2		Q J 4
	A J 6 5 3 2	
	8 2	
	Q 4	
	K 7 5	

After winning the opening club lead, South had no trouble taking 10 tricks. No other game would have made.

Question: What else should I know about reverses?

Answer: Auctions that are forcing for one round, but not necessarily game forcing, are tricky. Even experts sometimes find themselves on shaky ground after a reverse. Opening 2 Notrump with ...

A Q K Q J 5 K J 7 6 5 K J

... to avoid a reverse auction after 1D by you, 1S by partner, definitely does not make you a coward in my book.

In the Beginning – The Rule of 1

You will recall in section 1 of our ruffing lesson (above), we eluded the Rule of 1 – letting the opponents keep their last outstanding winning trump.

	Declarer	Dummy
S	2	7 6 5 4
H	A K Q 3 2	4
D	A 5 4 3 2	K 8 7 6
C	A 2	K 5 4 3

Ending up in a 5 Diamond contract, your losers could be one Spade, two Hearts, and perhaps one Diamond when opponents are 3-1 in the suit. North leads the Club Queen to your winning honor – now what? Clearly, you want to ruff two rounds of Hearts. On this holding, you can afford to play two rounds of trump; when one opponent shows out after the second trump, you acknowledge they will win their Diamond Queen. Using the Rule of 1, you do not play a third Club this time. Instead cash your Heart Ace, ruff a Heart, come back to your hand and ruff a second Heart. Hopefully you prepared for this strategy before you played on trick one and won with the dummy's Club King rather than your Club Ace! Otherwise, how will you get back to declarer's hand? No, playing a Spade won't help; seeing your ruffing strategy, the opponents win the trick and cash their Club Queen to knock out your last trump in dummy. Oops. That would be the same problem as if we were to play 3 rounds of trump. So the Rule of 1 has its place but we still need to plan ahead, this time keeping an entry to declarer hand. Let's try another one.

	Declarer	Dummy
S	A 5 4 3 2	K 8 7 6
H	A 2	4 3
D	A 4 3 2	5
C	A 2	K Q J 5 4 3

Our contract is a small slam, 6 Spades. North leading the Heart King which we win and put on our thinking cap. Our losers could be three Diamonds, one Heart, and maybe a Spade. Of course, we envision pitching a Heart loser and several Diamonds on the lovely dummy Clubs. Declarer should probe with two rounds of trump Spades – this time beginning with the dummy's Spade King so we will be in declarer's hand on the second play of the Spade Ace, ensuring transportation for future ruffing. Again, one opponent shows out on the second Spade so they have a winning Spade Queen. The Rule of 1 warns us to consider alternatives before blindly playing a third losing trump. Here's our cards at this point:

	Declarer	Dummy	
S	- 5 4 3 -	- 8 7 -	(opponents' hold the SQ)
H	- 2	4 -	
D	A 4 3 2	5	
C	A 2	K Q J 5 4 3	

If we play a third Spade, the opponents win the trick and cash their Heart Queen to set the contract. Then how about winning the Diamond Ace, ruffing a Diamond, returning to our hand with the Club Ace, and ruffing a second Diamond? We would have one remaining Diamond and one Club. If we tried pitching them on the dummy Clubs, down we go! We have eight Clubs, the opponents five, so with a 3-2 split, they will ruff a Diamond and cash their remaining Heart winner. How about the brute force approach, attacking the Clubs straight away? Yes, this is the winning line: we begin playing the Club Ace and play a low Club to dummy's King; so far, so good. Then we begin running our Clubs – if an opponent ruffs, we pitch our Heart on the loser; this was the neat sluffing tactic we discussed in section 2, playing a loser on loser. Now we can win our Diamond Ace, ruff a Diamond in dummy, and pitch like crazy on the dummy's freshly promoted three baby Clubs. Here were the hands after winning two rounds of Clubs, proceeding with the Club Queen and pitching declarer's Heart 2 (notice the dummy's only loser is the Spade Queen):

	Declarer	Dummy	
S	- 5 4 3 -	- 8 7 -	(opponents' hold the SQ)
H	- 2	4 -	
D	A 4 3 2	5	
C	- -	- Q J 5 4 -	

So, is it always right not to pull the last trump? No, not when the opponents' could disrupt entries to a long running suit without entries. This hand is similar to the last, but notice how the dummy lacks outside entries:

	Declarer	Dummy
S	A K 7 6 5 4	3 2
H	A K 4	3 2
D	A 2	5 4 3
C	A 2	K Q J 5 4 3

Again, we are in our favorite contract, 6 Spades. Fortunately, North leads the Heart Queen to our Ace. We play Heart Ace, all follow. On the Heart King, we again find the opponents' are 3-1 and will eventually win the Spade Queen. But this time we cannot use our friend, the Rule of 1. If we cash the Club Ace and begin playing dummy Clubs, when the opponents' ruff with the outstanding Spade Queen, it is all over. No more entries, no more pitches, no more promotion – how sad. Instead, if we draw the last trump, the opponents' can do no harm. We have controls in all the suits and can now run the dummy's beautiful Clubs! Thank goodness North didn't make an opening lead of a Diamond or our Rule of 1 story would fizzle! The point is, when the promotion race is on, it helps to be one step ahead – often the name of the game is control of the outside suits.

Dummy rights and limitation – Laws 42 and 43

It's true - [Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness](#) are “unalienable rights” in the United States Declaration of Independence. Yet at the Bridge table, please be careful or you can lose your “qualified” dummy rights! Let's see what the Bridge Laws have to say about dummy's rights and limitations:

Law 42 – Dummy Rights

Dummy is entitled to give information as to fact or law, but may not initiate the discussion; and provided he has not forfeited his rights (see Law 43) he may also

- (a) ask declarer (but not a defender), when he has failed to follow suit, whether he has a card of the suit led.
- (b) try to prevent any irregularity by declarer. He may, for example, warn declarer against leading from the wrong hand.
- (c) draw attention to any irregularity, but only after play is concluded.

Law 43 - Dummy Limitations

Dummy may not participate in the play (except to play the cards of dummy's hand as directed by declarer), or make any comment on the bidding, play, or score of the current deal; and if he does so, Law 16 may apply. During play, dummy may not call attention to an irregularity once it has occurred. Dummy forfeits the rights provided in (a), (b) and (c) of Law 42 if he exchanges hands with declarer, leaves his seat to watch declarer play, or, on his own initiative, looks at the face of a card in either defender's hand; and if, thereafter,

(a) he is the first to draw attention to a defender's irregularity, declarer may not enforce any penalty for the offense.

(b) he warns declarer not to lead from the wrong hand, (penalty) either defender may choose the hand from which declarer shall lead.

(c) he is the first to ask declarer if a play from declarer's hand constitutes a revoke, declarer must substitute a correct card if his play was a revoke, and (penalty) unless Law 64(d) applies, one trick is transferred to the defending side.

So when you are dummy, do not look at your partner's cards when offered, or try to look at your opponents' cards (if opponents want to show them to you, that's fine). Bottom line – fight for your rights: *no peeking!*

We hope you are enjoying the BridgeHands website and eMag Newsletters. If you have any comments or suggestions, we would enjoy hearing from you.

Sincerely,

BridgeHands



BridgeHands

email: support@bridgehands.com

phone: 707-769-4499

web: <http://www.bridgehands.com>