

Trump Coup

By Lee Prellwitz

So this hand came up in the team game yesterday.

♠7
♥J108653
♦KQ
♣A843

♠AKQ9542
♥A7
♦A63
♣9

Art passed and I opened a strong club. He bid one heart (five or more hearts, eight or more high cards) and I bid two spades (shows a no loser suit) and Art bid three clubs (ace of clubs), I bid three diamonds (ace of diamonds) and Art bid four diamonds (king of diamonds.) So I now bid four hearts (ace of hearts) and Art bid four spades (he might have bid five diamonds which should be the queen) and I bid six spades.

The opening lead was the king of hearts which you win. This looks straightforward, but when you lay down the ace of spades, LHO plays the 10. Can you make this if spades are 4-1?

Answer --- if RHO has four clubs and three diamonds with his jack fourth of spades the answer is yes. You cash a second high trump, if trumps are 4-1 you continue with a club to the ace and a club ruff. Now a diamond to the king and another club ruff. Another diamond to the queen and a third club ruff. Now you cash the ace of diamonds. IF RHO follows to all of these you have reached a three card ending in which you and RHO both have two trumps, Q9 for you and J8 for RHO. You exit with your heart loser, and RHO plays his last nontrump card, whatever it is, and you win the last two tricks with the jack of trumps surrounded. The key is to get your trumps shortened to the same length as RHO's and to then exit with your loser.

So did I play it this way and did it work? I had figured this out, but when I cashed the king of trumps at trick three, LHO followed with the six; he was merely toying with me, as trumps split 3-2. So I merely pulled the last trump and claimed twelve tricks.

Another chance.

So you are playing a six board round robin match (two of three teams advancing to the semifinals in the compact knockout) in which you are spotting the opponents a 5.1 IMP handicap. You start -200 in five clubs doubled on the first hand when trumps are 2-0 with the king doubleton behind the ace, and the opponents probably can't even make three spades.

So on the fifth board (nothing good or bad has happened on the second through the fourth boards) with nobody vulnerable you pick up:

♠J1063
♥A1053
♦KQ76
♣6

It goes pass on your right, you pass, one spade on your left, double by partner, two spades on your right. For better or worse you bid four hearts, and it goes all pass. Too bad, you were hoping for a sacrifice.

A spade is led and partner tables:

♠5
♥KJ74
♦1042
♣AK1083

Now you wish you could back up and play two spades doubled. Not easy to do, as a double by you would have been responsive, and it isn't clear that partner has enough for a second double, although he knows the state of the match as well.

RHO wins the ace of spades at trick one. After some thought RHO (a thoughtful but not expert player) leads the diamond nine. Rightly or wrong you fly the king. It loses to the ace (expected) and the five of diamonds comes back. You play the ten from dummy, and it gets covered with the jack (unexpected) and your queen. Now what?

I couldn't afford to pull trump, taking a heart finesse through LHO in the process (note that it appears as if RHO has the ace-queen of spades + the jack of diamonds for the raise to two spades, as LHO would have led the king of spades from king-queen) as this would leave me with spade losers in hand, a diamond loser, and clubs not yet established, so I tried to establish clubs by cashing the ace-king (discarding a diamond from hand) and ruffing the third round. If clubs were established (queen, jack, third with LHO), I could play ace, king of hearts, eschewing the finesse, and throwing my last diamond on the ten of clubs, losing only to the outstanding trump. Both opponents followed to the three rounds of clubs, (LHO playing the jack on the third round) but unfortunately the queen was still outstanding. Now it appears that I need LHO to have the fourth club. So I ruff the jack of spades, with the queen falling on my right (expected.) RHO discards a diamond when I lead the fourth round of clubs from dummy. I ruff this and am close to getting to ten tricks. I have seven tricks in, and just need the queen of hearts on my left to win three more.

The four card ending is as follows.

♠ ---

♥ KJ

♦ 4

♣ 10

♠ 10

♥ A10

♦ 7

♣ ---

I lead my fourth spade, and ruff with dummy's jack of hearts. When that wins, RHO discarding his last diamond, I cash dummy's king of hearts, ruff the ten of clubs with the ace of hearts, and concede my diamond loser at trick thirteen to the outstanding trumps in the opponents' hands.

Note that LHO erred when he played the jack on the third round of clubs. I knew that he had the king of spades and ace of diamonds for his opening bid. The only outstanding high cards that are unknown were the queen of hearts, queen-jack of clubs, and queen of spades (which is probably with RHO.) In that case LHO should have both rounded queens for his opening bid. So he should play the queen (from equals) on the third round of clubs, as I may not know the location of the jack.

Also note that when I ruffed the third spade I led the jack, not the ten. LHO might error and cover the jack with the king; if he does, then the king and queen of spades fall on the same trick. I can then ruff the fourth club back to my hand, and led the established ten of spades discarding dummy's diamond loser as RHO ruffs. Now I make in the three card ending regardless of the location of the queen of hearts. I win trick eleven in dummy with the jack of hearts, ruff the ten of clubs with the ace of hearts, and win trick thirteen with the king of hearts.