

Don't give away a Ruff and Discard

It is very bad to give declarer a “ruff and discard” – it almost always results in a poor score for the defence.

How to avoid doing so: if you know (i) there is a trump in both dummy and declarer's hands, and (ii) dummy and declarer are both now void in a particular suit, THEN do not lead that suit.

Consider this board from Monday BBO 3 June 2024

Board 11
 South Deals
 None Vul

♠ A T 7 5
 ♥ A J
 ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ T 4 3

♠ 8
 ♥ Q 8 7 5 4 2
 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ K J 8 6

W ↓ E
 N
 S

♠ Q J
 ♥ T 9 3
 ♦ A K J T 8
 ♣ Q 9 7

♠ K 9 6 4 3 2
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ A 5 2

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	-	-	-	3	3
S	-	-	-	3	2
E	2	2	3	-	-
W	2	2	3	-	-

South is declarer in Spades. On any lead, the double dummy analysis shows that South can make 9 tricks. So long as the Spades break 2-1 (as they do), South can make 6 spades, 2 hearts and the AC – i.e. 9 tricks. And there are 4 “unavoidable” losers – 2 diamonds and 2 clubs.

But, if the defenders give declarer a “Ruff & Discard”, one of those losers ‘magically’ evaporates, and declarer makes 10 tricks.

Don't voluntarily give declarer a ruff & discard; take full advantage of any opportunity to ruff & discard

At one table, 6C was led to the Q and A. Soon, East was able to cash the AD and return a club which West won with JC, and continued with KC. This was the position after 5 tricks:

Optimum:
 EW 4Hx; +100
 LoTT: 18-19 = -1

Contract: 2♠ by S
 NS Tricks: 1
 EW Tricks: 4

♠ A 10 7 5
 ♥ A J
 ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ 10 4 3

♠ 8
 ♥ Q 8 7 5 4 2
 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ K J 8 6

W ↓ E
 N
 S

♠ Q J
 ♥ 10 9 3
 ♦ A K J 10 8
 ♣ Q 9 7

♠ K 9 6 4 3 2
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ A 5 2

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	-	-	-	3	3
S	-	-	-	3	2
E	2	2	3	-	-
W	2	2	3	-	-

Why should West avoid leading 8C to trick 6?

Suppose West does lead 8C, how should declarer play that trick? (Hint: make sure your chosen discard actually reduces your losers.)

As declarer, help your opps to give you a ruff & discard

At another table, the 9D was led and EW cashed 2 diamonds and led another, ruffed by declarer with 9S. Declarer then cleared trumps in 2 rounds, cashed the two high hearts, and ruffed the last diamond. This was the situation after 8 tricks:

Optimum:
 EW 4Hx; +100
 LoTT: 18-19 = -1

Contract: 3♠ by S
 NS Tricks: 6
 EW Tricks: 2

♠ A 10 7 5
 ♥ A J
 ♦ Q 6 5 3
 ♣ 10 4 3

♠ 8
 ♥ Q 8 7 5 4 2
 ♦ 9 7
 ♣ K J 8 6

W ↓ E
 N
 S

♠ Q J
 ♥ 10 9 3
 ♦ A K J 10 8
 ♣ Q 9 7

♠ K 9 6 4 3 2
 ♥ K 6
 ♦ 4 2
 ♣ A 5 2

	♠	♥	♦	♣	NT
N	-	-	-	3	3
S	-	-	-	3	2
E	2	2	3	-	-
W	2	2	3	-	-

Declarer has now stripped both hands of hearts and diamonds. If a defender can be cajoled into leading a heart or a diamond, declarer will get a bonus trick from the ruff and discard – making 10.

As declarer, what is your best play at this point?

As defenders, how can either East or West avoid declarer's sinister plan?