

Learning Points – A Curious Bridge Hand

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Declarer Play LEVEL: Expert

South Deals Both Vul IMPs	♠ J86 ♥ J1074 ♦ 6 ♣ AK932	← Partner
♠ AQ93 ♥ 9652 ♦ 753 ♣ J6	N W E S	♠ 10 ♥ Q83 ♦ AK1042 ♣ Q1074
Bruce→	♠ K7542 ♥ AK ♦ QJ98 ♣ 85	

Here's Bruce's report: (Hand directions rotated for convenience).

"Some players you always do well against, others you don't. I was playing against one of each in the semis of a knockout. The opening lead was the ♦7.

South	West	North	East
1♠	Pass	1N ¹	2♦
Pass	Pass	3♣	All Pass
West Leads ♦7			
1 = Forcing			

East won with the ♦K (dummy playing the lone ♦6 and declarer contributing the ♦8) and shifted to the ♠10. The ♠2 came from declarer, and after long thought the ♠3 from West, won by the ♠J in dummy. Declarer needs to ruff as many ♦ as possible and score some small trumps in hand.

The play proceeded:

- 3) ♥4 to my ♥A
- 4) ♦9 ruff with the ♠6
- 5) ♥7 to my ♥K
- 6) ♦J ruff with the ♠7
- 7) ♣A all follow
- 8) ♥J-Q-ruff ♠4-♥6
- 9) ♣8 to dummy's ♣K
- 10) ♥10-♦10-♦Q-♥9.

[See the 3-card ending](#)→

Now in the 3-card ending North leads the ♣2 fetching the ♣Q from East. South ruffs and West must over ruff with the ♠9.

Now West is end-played! West must lead from the ♠AQ into my ♠K7 making 4.

South Deals Both Vul IMPs	♠ ♥ ♦ ♣ 932	← Partner
♠ AQ9 ♥ ♦ ♣	N W E S	♠ ♥ ♦ A ♣ Q10
Bruce→	♠ K54 ♥ ♦ ♣	

3-Card Ending

West can hold South to 3♣ making 3 easy enough by winning the ♠Q and exiting a side suit, eventually end-playing South to score 3♠s and a ♦. Since this was a team game West was trying to beat the hand.

South Deals Both Vul IMPs	♠ ♥ J ♦ ♣ AK9	<i>Alternate line ending</i> ← Partner
♠ ♥ 9 ♦ 5 ♣ J6	N W E S	♠ ♥ ♦ 10 ♣ Q107
Bruce→	♠ ♥ ♦ J9 ♣ 85	

Alternatively, West can win ♠Q, ♠A, and exit a ♠, stopping the ♦ ruffs (but giving up a ♠ trick). The ♥s will still ruff out for 3 winners and 1 ♦ pitch. The ♦Q will force the ♦A (before the ♥ ruff), and the ♦J will become the 9th trick for declarer.

The ♠J in dummy wins the 3rd ♠ trick. Declarer then leads a small ♥ to the ♥A. The ♠K draws last trump from West. ♥K then ♦Q leaves 2 ♣ entries to the dummy to ruff out the ♥Q and get back to the now established ♥10.

In this line declarer uses a ♥ ruff to get to hand to cash the good ♦J. Here's the 4-card ending with South to play. Start with the good ♦J, pitching a losing ♣ from dummy. A small ♣ racks up 9 tricks".

Learning Points

1. Note South refused the limit raise holding 14 Support Points. The ♠ suit is weak and the ♦ values might not be working. 4♠ is virtually a lock if South's ♦QJ are ♠QJ instead! Quacks in side suits are not as useful as Quacks in working suits.
2. When faced with long weak trumps it is often prudent to cash side winners and look to score many small trump ruffs.

3. When defending it's often right to switch to trumps when declarer will be ruffing in the short hand.
4. Form of scoring matters to the defense: in MP Pairs you want to get the best score against the field. In Teams you want a net plus score – so defeating contracts is more important than limiting overtricks.
5. Note if West leads a ♣ and not a ♦, 1 of dummy's entries must be used ahead of time. This might be enough to set 3♠ if defense can manage to clear trumps before declarer sets up ♥. Double dummy, defense would insist on ♣ before ♥ are set up, then clear trump thereafter. The opportunity is to attack entries to the weaker hand – if you can guess which suit correctly.

Key Words: Score small trumps with ruffs, entries, trump end play