

Play & Learn



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Are you a good listener?

Cover up the East–West hands on the deal below and plan the play as South in 2♥. West leads the ♦ Q.

Dir: South ♠ 5
 Vul: None ♥ A Q 5
 ♦ 8 7 5 3 2
 ♣ 10 6 5 4

♠ A Q J 9	N	♥ 6 4 3
♥ 6 3	W E	♥ 8 7 4 2
♦ Q J 10 9	S	♦ K 6 4
♣ 9 8 7		♣ K Q J

♠ K 10 8 7 2
 ♥ K J 10 9
 ♦ A
 ♣ A 3 2

West	North	East	South
			1♠
Pass	1NT	Pass	2♥
All Pass			

South's losers are two clubs and possibly five spades. Recently, we've discussed ruffing losers in dummy. This deal offers a different twist — a *crossruff*, basically ruffing in both hands. South's singleton opposite North's singleton in a different suit suggests considering this play. First,

► Upgrading Your Game *cont.*

❖ Make the game more pleasant for others. We don't have Zero Tolerance just for unacceptable behavior; we should also remember the late Aileen Osofsky's promotion of goodwill at the table and try to be model bridge citizens. There are so many sad stories of players driven away from the game by rudeness and lack of friendliness. We can all help change that. □

however, declarer must void dummy of spades. We usually count losers in a suit contract, but it's a good idea to count winners when you plan to crossruff. You see the possibility of winning two minor-suit aces and seven trump tricks by using North's trumps separately from yours.

So how should you proceed after winning the ♦ A? Don't answer until you consider the defenders' best play when they get the lead. A good defense against a crossruff is for the defenders to lead trumps, forcing declarer to use those precious trumps two at a time instead of individually.

East–West will gain the lead once before the crossruff can begin. Expect them to lead a heart. Knowing that, what is your play at trick two?

Don't even think about leading a trump to dummy so you can lead toward the ♠ K. Spending one of North's trumps that way means one less ruff in dummy. If the defenders lead another trump, you will get to ruff only one spade. Just play a low spade from hand. Their best return is a trump, which holds you to two ruffs in dummy for a total of six heart tricks and two aces. Any other lead allows you to ruff three times in dummy to make an overtrick.

Don't count on that overtrick. The singleton spade in dummy combined with the bidding and play make your desire to ruff spade losers obvious, so expect any defender who is paying attention to return a trump.

It's interesting that South and West made the best plays when they considered the plays their opponents might make. Good players are tuned

in to the damage the opponents might try to do.

Can the East–West defenders do better? With a trump opening lead, they can defeat 2♥. One of dummy's trumps is gone immediately and a second one is gone when they return a trump after winning the spade trick. The best you can do then is seven tricks — one ruff in dummy, your own four hearts and the minor-suit aces. Did West have enough clues to find that trump lead?

North–South have had what is known as a preference auction. South bid two suits and North showed a preference for the second suit by passing. North never actually supported hearts, and North–South might not even have an eight-card fit. Responder simply dislikes one of opener's suits less than the other and is too weak to do anything but settle for the least of evils. Listening to the bidding gives West one clue. Do you see the other strong clue? West is very strong in declarer's long spade suit and doesn't want the few trumps in dummy to be used to stop those strong spades from winning tricks. Even with the nice diamond sequence, West should have been able to find a trump opening lead. □