## CLASSIC REWIND

## Refusing to Ruff

BY MARSHALL MILES

ur spades

own to have five spades bs. If he has three diane heart, we can cash the enter dummy with a diaclub, cash two diamonds, m down to ten-eight-six th the lead in dummy—a (If he ruffs middle, we m jack-seven-five.)

East is two-two in the red ntract can be made if West hearts, so the correct line queen of clubs and to lead West has the ace of hearts, returns a diamond (best). 1y, ruff a club, enter dumamond, and lead the king East follows, sluff the last rive at the three-card end-1 previously. If East ruffs earts with a middle trump, enviable position of being by either underruffing or Check it out.

ays are to cash the queen and to lead a heart up.

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There are many cases where it does not pay to ruff. The benefit of refusing to overruff can be easy to see: Suppose the declarer, South, ruffs from king-queen of trumps and West has the ace-jack; by discarding, West assures two defensive trump tricks where overruffing might enable declarer to pick up the jack. It is particularly important not to overruff with a holding such as ace-ten-low or ace-nine-low when declarer ruffs with an honor.

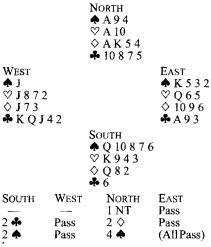
Normally, it does not pay to ruff a low card when the hand that plays after it can also play a low card rather than a winner. (This is often expressed as, "don't ruff a loser.") Nor does it often pay to ruff with a high trump. It is generally better to wait to obtain the lead in a side suit so that the high trump can be cashed, drawing two for one.

Here are two less-obvious examples where it does not pay for a defender to ruff:

North **♠** Q J 6 ♥Q1984 ♦ A 765 4 WEST EAST ♠ 10 7 4 2 ♠ K 8 5 Ф́ 6 ♥ K 10 2 ♦ QJ10943 🗣 K 8 7 ♣ J 10 6 5 3 2 SOUTH **↑** A 9 3 ♥ A 7 5 3 ♦ K 8 2 👫 A Q 9 North SOUTH WEST EAST 1 NT 2 ♥ 2 **♣** 4 ♡ Pass Pass Pass (All Pass)

West leads the queen of diamonds, and dummy plays low. If East ruffs, it will cost him a trump trick while South follows suit with a loser. Even if West's spade honor had been the ace (so that East could obtain two quick ruffs), discarding would not lose a trick. When declarer has an inescapable diamond loser, East would need *three* ruffs to gain by trumping in early.

Here, East should refuse to overruff to wrest control from declarer:



Declarer ruffs the second club, then follows with the ace-king of hearts, a heart ruff, the ace-queen of diamonds, and a heart ruff with the nine of spades. If East overruffs, declarer will make an overtrick; if East discards a diamond, declarer must lose two more tricks. In effect, East preserves his trumps to retain control, denying declarer a diamond winner. (At double-dummy, declarer could have cashed three diamonds before ruffing the last heart.)