

# REFUSING TO RUFF

BY MARSHALL MILES

NORTH  
 ♠ 4  
 ♥ K 9 7 3  
 ♦ A K J 8  
 ♣ A 10 9 4

SOUTH  
 ♠ K Q J 7 5 3  
 ♥ 4  
 ♦ Q 9 3  
 ♣ Q 8 5

our spades  
 own to have five spades  
 bs. If he has three dia-  
 ne heart, we can cash the  
 enter dummy with a dia-  
 club, 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).  
 y, ruff a club, enter dum-  
 amond, and lead the king  
 East follows, sluff the last  
 rive at the three-card end-  
 l previously. If East ruffs  
 parts with a middle trump,  
 enviable position of being  
 by either undertruffing or  
 Check it out.

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

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 pon request).

There are many cases where it does not pay to ruff. The benefit of refusing to *overtruff* 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 overtruffing might enable declarer to pick up the jack. It is particularly important not to overtruff 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  
 ♥ Q J 9 8 4  
 ♦ A 7 6 5  
 ♣ 4

WEST  
 ♠ K 8 5  
 ♥ 6  
 ♦ Q J 10 9 4 3  
 ♣ K 8 7

EAST  
 ♠ 10 7 4 2  
 ♥ K 10 2  
 ♦ —  
 ♣ J 10 6 5 3 2

SOUTH  
 ♠ A 9 3  
 ♥ A 7 5 3  
 ♦ K 8 2  
 ♣ A Q 9

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
1 NT	Pass	2 ♣	Pass
2 ♥	Pass	4 ♥	(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 overtruff to wrest control from declarer:

NORTH  
 ♠ A 9 4  
 ♥ A 10  
 ♦ A K 5 4  
 ♣ 10 8 7 5

WEST  
 ♠ J  
 ♥ J 8 7 2  
 ♦ J 7 3  
 ♣ K Q J 4 2

EAST  
 ♠ K 5 3 2  
 ♥ Q 6 5  
 ♦ 10 9 6  
 ♣ A 9 3

SOUTH  
 ♠ Q 10 8 7 6  
 ♥ K 9 4 3  
 ♦ Q 8 2  
 ♣ 6

SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	EAST
—	—	1 NT	Pass
2 ♣	Pass	2 ♦	Pass
2 ♠	Pass	4 ♠	(All Pass)

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 overtruffs, 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.)