

BRIDGE BITES

from The American Contract Bridge League

RUFFS IN THE LONG HAND

By: Brian Gunnell

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| | ♠ JT98 ♥ AK74 ♦ K52 ♣ T2 | |
| ♠ A32 ♥ QJT ♦ J97 ♣ AQJ8 | North West East Declarer | ♠ 4 ♥ 9832 ♦ QT863 ♣ K94 |
| | ♠ KQ765 ♥ 65 ♦ A4 ♣ 7653 | |

We'll spare you the auction, but it looks like Partner's been overbidding again, as you find yourself declaring 4♠ on slender values. The good news is that the hands fit well and after the opening lead of the ♥Q you actually have a chance. You have four natural trump tricks and four side-suit winners, so the other two must come from ruffs. The obvious solution is to ruff two Clubs in Dummy (the "short hand"). Do you see any snags?

The problem with going after Club ruffs in Dummy is that the lead must be lost twice. If the trumps are 3-1 this will allow the defense to lead three rounds of trumps, holding Dummy's ruffs to just one and leaving Declarer a trick short. The solution is to go after *three* ruffs in *Declarer's* hand. That way ten tricks are reached via Dummy's three natural trump tricks, plus Declarer's three ruffs, plus the four side-suit winners. So, Declarer wins the opening lead with the ♥A, cashes ♥K, ruffs a Heart, cashes ♦A and ♦K and ruffs a Diamond. Declarer eventually reaches Dummy with a trump, and can score that third ruff in the long hand.

When Declarer is ruffing those red suits she will take care to ruff high, thereby ensuring that she actually can reach Dummy later on. If, after taking two low ruffs, Declarer left herself with ♠KQ7, West would be able to thwart Declarer's plan.

P.S. Yes, an opening trump lead sets the contract.

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