

MAINTAINING TRUMP CONTROL

When the opponents have one or two high trumps outstanding, it is often better NOT to draw those trumps. Just let them ruff in when they feel like it.

Exception: when you need to run a long suit and cannot afford to have the opponents ruff in (because you won't be able to get back to your long suit), go ahead and give up a trick to a high trump first (if you can afford it). If you have plenty of entries, just run the long suit and let the opponent take a high trump (or two) whenever s/he wishes. You can still return to running the long suit after that.

When you have limited trumps, especially in 4-3 (Moysian) fits (but sometimes with 5-3 or even 6-2 fits), it may be better to discard a loser than to ruff in the long trump hand. **If you are forced to ruff in the long trump hand and the opponents have 4 trumps in one hand, you could easily “lose control” of the hand (i.e., one opponent ends up with more trumps than you have).**

When you have a 4-4 fit in a poor trump suit with Axxx opposite xxxx, you must lose two trump tricks (even with 3-2 break) for reasons of control, it is often best to give up one trump trick early. Then pull a second round with the Ace and don't pull any more. Let the opponent with the one high trump left ruff in at will.

If you have one sure third-round trump loser (e.g., AKxxx opposite xxx) and dummy has a side-suit void with only 3 small trumps, give up one trump trick FIRST round (to maintain control—and a trump in dummy to ruff the suit in which dummy is void).

When setting up a side suit through ruffing, ruff HIGH when you have the spots such that you can afford it. Do not risk being over-ruffed.

Sometimes the trumps are all low in dummy (e.g., Axxx opposite xxx), so you have to pull two rounds of trump before ruffing a side suit trick. If someone over-ruffs, it is a natural trump trick. Sometimes, you cannot even afford the overruff, but must get one ruff in dummy to set up your side suit (or to eliminate a loser). Pull two rounds of trumps and hope that the opponent with three trumps has to follow to the second (or third) round of your side suit as you ruff.

Sometimes you must ruff a winner to prevent the opponents from ruffing it. If you have a 6-2 fit with two high trumps in dummy and a side suit of AKQx opposite xx, you must play the Ace, King and ruff BOTH the low card and the queen in dummy with high trumps lest an opponent ruff one. (They have a sure entry—perhaps the Ace of trumps.)

When there is a danger of having your winners ruffed, if you can lead toward them (through the person who might ruff), you can play a low card if that opponent ruffs and a high card if they do not ruff.

If the opponents are threatening to overruff you, you may be able to discard a loser in another suit rather than risking an overruff or a trump promotion. You can sometimes “transfer the ruff” by discarding in a second suit and later ruffing that second suit. Example: K32 43 J1098xx Jx opposite AQJ1095 AKxx A A7. Contract: 6S. Lead: King of clubs. Take Ace of clubs, and play Ace of hearts, King of hearts, low heart—discarding a club from dummy. Now you can ruff one club with a low

spade and your 4th heart with the King of spades. If you tried for two heart ruffs in dummy, you might be overruffed (because you have to ruff with a low trump the first time).