

101. Ruff-Ruff

In a long team match against top-flight opponents, I hold:

♠ 10 9 ♥ 9 8 5 ♦ A J 10 8 5 ♣ A Q 4

With no one vulnerable, West, on my left, opens **one club**. Partner overcalls **one spade**, and when East passes, I try **two diamonds**. West bids **two hearts**, partner passes, and East takes a preference to **three clubs**. After two passes, partner bids **three diamonds**. There is no further bidding. The full auction:

| | | | |
|------|-------|----------|-------|
| West | North | East | South |
| 1♣ | 1♠ | Pass | 2♦ |
| 2♥ | Pass | 3♣ | Pass |
| Pass | 3♦ | All Pass | |

West leads the ♣10 and partner puts down a reasonable dummy:

♠ Q J 8 5 3
♥ K 10 7
♦ K 6 2
♣ J 8

♣10 led

♠ 10 9
♥ 9 8 5
♦ A J 10 8 5
♣ A Q 4

Initial Analysis:

There are two spade and two heart losers, so my chances will depend on not losing a trump. The straightforward play is to ruff the third club in dummy and rely on a successful diamond finesse. The problem with this approach is that if diamonds break four-one, which is not unlikely on West's aggressive bidding, there will be only one small trump to lead from dummy. *How do I deal with this prospect?*

My plan must be to set up the queen of spades for a club discard. I lead the ♠9, which West wins with the king, with East playing the ♠2. West shifts to the ace and queen of

hearts. I win the ♥K. How should I handle trumps?

The usual method is to cash dummy's honor and finesse on the second round. Because of the entry situation, I can't afford this protection. I take the small risk of losing to the singleton ♦Q by taking a first round finesse of the ♦J, which wins. Now I lead the ♠10, won by West's ace. West cashes the ♥J, with East following, and leads a fourth round, observing the sound defense strategy that once the defenders have taken all their outside tricks, an attack on the trump suit is often productive. I ruff with dummy's ♦6. East pauses momentarily before discarding a club. *What now?*

The instinctive action here is to discard a club. But if I do, I am limited to finding East with two trumps at this stage, which I think is contraindicated by the bidding. So I try the effect of underruffing with the ♦5. What now?

This is the picture I visualize:

| | | |
|-----------|----------|---------|
| | ♠ Q J 8 | |
| | ♥ — | |
| | ♦ K | |
| | ♣ 8 | |
| ♠ x | | ♠ x |
| ♥ — | | ♥ — |
| ♦ — | | ♦ Q x x |
| ♣ 9 x x x | | ♣ x |
| | ♠ — | |
| | ♥ — | |
| | ♦ A 10 8 | |
| | ♣ Q 4 | |

I lead to the ♣Q, return to dummy's ♦K. As I had suspected, West shows out. The ♠J is led, East has to follow and I discard the low club. I am in dummy at trick twelve, and my ace and jack of diamonds cannot be prevented from taking the last two tricks. Making three!

The full deal:

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| | ♠ Q J 8 5 3 | |
| | ♥ K 10 7 | |
| | ♦ K 6 2 | |
| | ♣ J 8 | |
| ♠ A K 4 | | ♠ 7 6 2 |
| ♥ A Q J 6 | | ♥ 4 3 2 |
| ♦ 3 | | ♦ Q 9 7 4 |
| ♣ 10 9 6 5 2 | | ♣ K 7 3 |
| | ♠ 10 9 | |
| | ♥ 9 8 5 | |
| | ♦ A J 10 8 5 | |
| | ♣ A Q 4 | |

Points of Interest:

- This hand was played by Benito Garozzo in a round-robin against France in the 1964 Olympiad. It raises a familiar theme of dealing with a shortage of trumps in dummy, which are needed both for ruffing and for leads for finesses. Garozzo solved the first problem nicely by setting up a spade trick for a club discard.

- The key card read was expecting West to be distributional due to his aggressive bidding opposite a passing partner.

- Garozzo then dealt with the ruff-discard stratagem by converting it to a "ruff-ruff." Actually, he could have accomplished the same effect by discarding from dummy on the heart lead. The critical play was to reduce his trumps to East's length. This allowed him to answer any discarding scheme that East came up with.