

BR 20.6 - When NOT to ruff : Loser on Loser play

In some situations it is to your advantage **not to ruff**. In such cases you invariably drop a loser of one suit onto a loser in another suit. This generally occurs in three different scenarios.

1. When, by reducing your trump length through ruffing, you may **lose trump control**
2. When by not ruffing you may **develop a winner** in the suit
3. When you are in danger of **being over ruffed**

(Down - Up)

Example 7 (Not losing trump control)

Declarer is in a **1D** contract.

North leads the **King of Hearts**, then the Ace, followed by the Heart Queen.

What do you do at trick 3?

If you ruff the trick you will have only three trumps left in your hand. If Opponents trumps break 4-2, which is most likely, you will lose trump control and never be able to set up winners in the Club suit. .

Declarer

♦ - K Q J 4
♠ - A K 6
♥ - 8 2
♣ - Q 8 7 2

Dummy

♦ - 10 9 5
♠ - 9 7 3
♥ - 9 5 4
♣ - K J 10 3

Do therefore a **loser on loser** play and discard your small Spade loser on the third Heart trick.

Declarer

♦ - K Q J 4
♠ - A K
♥ -
♣ - Q 8 7 2

Dummy

♦ - 10 9 5
♠ - 9 7 3
♥ -
♣ - K J 10 3

Now if Opponents continue with a 4th Heart lead you can ruff it in Dummy with the 10, and the 4 card trump holding in your own hand remains intact. In essence what you have done is transferring your Spade loser to become a Heart loser instead.

(Down - Up)

Example 8 (Establishing an extra side suit winner)

Declarer is in a **4S** contract.

North leads a **small Heart**. Dummy plays low and South wins with the King.

At trick 2 South leads another small Heart. What do you do?

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

If you ruff the trick you gain nothing as North will then play low of course. Instead discard a Club loser in your hand and let North win the trick with his Ace.

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

Dummy's Heart Queen has now become a winner. After drawing the enemy trumps, ending up in Dummy, you can lead the Heart Queen and discard the second Club loser in your hand.

You would always have made your contract, but this way you make 11 tricks instead of 10. A winning board in any duplicate competition.

([Down](#) - [Up](#))

Example 9 (Avoiding being over ruffed)

Declarer (West) is in a **4H** contract, after North opened with a weak two bid of **2S**.

North leads the **King of Spades** followed by the Queen, his Partner signaling a doubleton (playing **high - low** first the 8 then the 2).

At trick 3 North leads his Spade Ace. What should you play in Dummy?

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

With only small trumps in Dummy, South is sure to be able to **over ruff**.

Discard therefore a small Diamond in Dummy's hand, and let North win the trick with his Ace.

If he leads it once more, you can ruff it high in your own hand.

Declarer

♥ - A K Q J 7 3

♠ -

♦ - A 9 4

♣ - 6

Dummy

♥ - 6 4 2

♠ -

♦ - K 8

♣ - A J 8 5 4

Whatever North now leads, you win the trick. Now first draw two rounds of trumps, then play two rounds of Diamonds (winning the second trick in your hand with the Ace) and ruff you 3rd Diamond in Dummy with his last remaining trump.

After that return to Declarer's hand to draw the last enemy trump.

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