

February 6, 2021

Bridge with Richard Ward

The Merrimac Coup is a defensive manoeuvre involving the deliberate sacrifice of a high card so as to knock out a vital entry to dummy. It was named after the Merrimac, an American coal-carrying ship sunk in 1898 in Santiago Harbour in an attempt to bottle up the Spanish fleet. This is a simple example and, yes, it is possible to find at the table.

NORTH			
♠	4 3		
♥	5 4 2		
♦	A 3		
♣	K Q J 10 9 3		
WEST	EAST		
♠	J 10 9 8 7	♠	A 5 2
♥	K 10 6	♥	Q 9 8 7
♦	10 9 8 4	♦	K 7 2
♣	6	♣	A 5 4
SOUTH			
♠	K Q 6		
♥	A J 3		
♦	Q J 6 5		
♣	8 7 2		

South declares 3NT on the lead of the jack of spades won by East's ace. Seeing the dangerous club suit, East plays the king of diamonds at trick two to destroy the entry. On some layouts this will not be successful but here, after the ace of clubs is taken on the third round of that suit, declarer has only eight tricks.

This one is more difficult to spot.

NORTH		W/ NIL VUL	
♠	A		
♥	8 4 2		
♦	A 6 5 3		
♣	9 8 7 6 3		
WEST	EAST		
♠	Q 10 9 6	♠	8 7 5 3
♥	Q 10	♥	A J 6 5
♦	K 9 8 7	♦	J 4 2
♣	A 5 4	♣	J 2
SOUTH			
♠	K J 4 2		
♥	K 9 7 3		
♦	Q 10		
♣	K Q 10		

West leads the ten of spades against South's 3NT won perforce by the ace. Declarer plays on clubs, West taking the first or second round, blocking the suit. Next comes the king of diamonds (Merrimac) and then a second diamond if this is ducked. To use some Australian slang: South is cactus! Well defended indeed.

Toowong Imp Pairs: 1 Charlie Lu / Watson Zhou; 2 Janeen Solomon / Maha Hoenig; 3 Kuldip Bedi / Marin Qin; **B:** Helen Chamberlin / Robin Steinhardt; **C:** Ann Thomson / Maureen Lovelock

Qld Wide Online Pairs January winners: Yolanda Carter / Toni Bardon; Barbara Kent / Murray Perrin; Les Bonnick / Malcolm Allan; Phil Hale / Carmel Martin x 2; Bob Hunt / Jane Swanson; Edda Strong / Tom Strong; Kay Goodwin / Warren Males; Alison Dawson / Peter Evans; Ian Jesser / Jim Wood.
