

## Bits and Bobs 3 – Rough Crossings and Cross Ruffings

Just like being exposed to a rough crossing can give you “mal de mer” or sea-sickness, being exposed to a cross ruffing based on, in your view, foul distribution, can also make you feel ill. (“mal de jeu de pont” (Excuse my French)).

Here are two such experiences that made feel a bit that way, fortunately they have been few and far between, the first a couple of years ago (but I haven’t forgotten!) and the second, very recently.

BOARD 13					
BD: 13		♠		Dir: N	
		♥ AJ7642		Vul: ALL	
		♦ Q2			
		♣ AQ975			
♠ T65				♠ AQ832	
♥ 95				♥ KQT8	
♦ KT98643				♦ AJ5	
♣ T				♣ 2	
		♠ KJ974			
		♥ 3			
		♦ 7			
		♣ KJ8643			
		♠			
		♥			
		♦			
		♣			
		NT			
N	6	-	2	-	-
S	6	-	2	-	-
E	-	2	-	1	-
W	-	2	-	1	-
					13
					3
					16
					8

21/9/20

Bidding:

N	E (me)	S	W
1H	Double	1S	Pass
2H	Pass	4C	Pass
6C	Double	All Pass	

West led the 10C and South proceeded to cross-ruff spades and hearts setting up the heart suit along the way for a diamond and spade discard to make 6C doubled with an overtrick.

BOARD 26					
BD: 26		♠ 98652		Dir: E	
		♥ KT7653		Vul: ALL	
		♦ A			
		♣ 6			
♠ QJ4				♠ AKT73	
♥				♥ 9	
♦ QJT982				♦ 54	
♣ AQT8				♣ KJ943	
		♠			
		♥ AQJ842			
		♦ K763			
		♣ 752			
		♠			
		♥			
		♦			
		♣			
		NT			
N			6		7
S			6		12
E	3	4		4	10
W	2	3		4	

4/8/22 pm

Bidding:

E	S	W	N
1S	2H	4S	5H
Double	All Pass		

West led the QS and, again, 13 tricks can now be made by ruffing the spade entering dummy with the 10H or KH, playing AD, ruffing a second spade, playing KD and discarding the singleton club from dummy and cross-ruffing the rest of the hand to make 5H doubled with 2 overtricks.

With cross ruffs, the recommended approach is to void side suits in both hands as well as playing off side suit winners and then use your trumps to cross- ruff your remaining side suit losers. They normally occur when dummy and your hand hold the vast majority of trumps. In the cases above, one round of trumps was all that was necessary to divest the defenders of their trump(s) but often declarer does not take even one round of trumps in the hope that she can make all her trumps separately and that the defenders will be forced to under-trump in the end-game. You should aim to cash your side suit winners early in the game. Otherwise, there is a risk of a defender discarding cards in that suit as you are busy trumping another suit enabling the defender to trump your side suit winner later on. Here is an entertaining but relevant hand from the literature. The author was the late Victor Mollo and his book "Bridge in the Menagerie" features the following hand on p37.

S 9873	
H J	
D AKQ	
C AQ874	
S KJ10	S Q4
H 10 9 8 7	H 5432
D 432	D 108765
C J102	C 93
S A652	
H AKQ6	
D J9	
C K65	

Hideous Hog, who played weak NT and sat South, opened his normal shortest minor suit in preparation for rebidding 3NT. His partner was the Rueful Rabbit.

The amazing but typical Hog-like bidding proceeded: 1D(prepared minor)-Pass-3C(opening bid)-Pass-3NT(that's where I want to be)-Pass-4D(agreeing suit, slam interest)-Pass-4H(an attempt to get partner to bid 4NT so that Hog could play the contract)-Pass-4S(is this a suit or a cue bid?)-Pass-5C(Oh well , I guess I'm going to have to let my partner play this hand)-Pass-7D (Rueful Rabbit was now convinced that the Hog had both the major Aces and the KC)-Passed Out.

The 10H was led. The Hog went into a trance and then won the JH, crossed to the AS and discarded the three remaining spades in the dummy on his top hearts. Things were now looking promising for a cross-ruff but how to cash three rounds of clubs without getting trumped? Hog played West for 3 x clubs, pretended to finesse clubs by leading to the QC, played the AC and played a small club back to hand. East (Papa), thinking that the Hog was going to ruff, discarded his QS. Hog won the KC, ruffed a spade with a top diamond, took a successful ruffing finesse of a fourth club with the 9D and cross-ruffed the rest of the hand to make 7D with his 3-2 fit! Papa got to under-ruff five times in the end game while his partner only under-ruffed three times! Note that with the 3-2 club break 7NT would have been straightforward but the Hog cross-ruff would certainly have given Papa and his partner "mal de (jeu de) pont" and a huge psychological disadvantage for the remainder of the game!